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THE
DENIAL;
OR, THE
HAPPY RETREAT.
A NOVEL.

By the Rev. JAMES THOMSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L . I .

THE SECOND EDITION CORRECTED.

*Hoc patrium est, potius consuefacere filium
Suâ sponte rectè facere, quàm alieno metu.
Hoc pater ac dominus interest: hoc qui nequit,
Fateatur se nescire imperare liberis.*

TERENT. in ADELPH.

'Tis this then is the duty of a father:
To make a son embrace a life of virtue
Rather from choice than terror or constraint.
Here lies the mighty difference between
A FATHER and a MASTER. He who knows not
How to do this, let him confess he knows not
How to rule children.

COLMAN.

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P R E F A C E.

THE chief intention of publication is instruction and entertainment. Where the latter is the principal motive of any production, it is certainly defective, as it encourages a waste of time, without the probability of reaping any essential benefit. Where the former is the only aim, although commendable and praise-worthy, the work will be deemed by many, dull, tedious, and insufferable. But where the *instructive* is combined with the *entertaining*, where the fine sensibilities of the human heart are made subservient to the purposes of morality, the work is perused with pleasure by the rational, and applauded by the judicious.

THE dissemination of virtue ought to be the first and only object of every publication; from the perusal of which the propensities of the youthful may be ameliorated, and the laudable inclination of the aged established. Where this is not the

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case, a tendency to vice is encouraged, and the habits of evil confirmed. To discourage this vicious tendency, to discountenance this proneness to evil, every friend to Society should exert, either privately or publickly, those talents with which he is endowed, for the confirmation of that virtue, which is too often exposed to the attacks of immorality, and the shafts of ridicule.

PERSONS who are engaged in the great concerns of life, are in general capable of judging for themselves ; but there are many who are wholly dependent on the judgement of others. The doctrines of IMMORALITY therefore, like an impetuous inundation, overwhelm the giddy and inconsiderate, the thoughtless and the vain, in the dreary whirlpool of perdition ; and give prevalence to that RIDICULE, which attempts to combat the principles of religion, to laugh at the sober precepts of morality, and tends finally to eradicate those seeds of virtue which, from negligence and inattention, have scarcely taken root in the youthful mind.

THAT the present is an age of levity, will scarcely be denied by any person of observation ; but that it is more criminal than the age of our predecessors, I will not take upon me to determine. To condemn is easy ; to demonstrate difficult. That the majority of a nation may give into many
of

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of the levities and frivolities of the age, without absolutely incurring the stain of actual guilt, is perhaps probable ; that many of the present generation may adopt, from example and precept, propensities injurious to the good of society, and pernicious to their own morals, without *finally* departing from the mild influence of virtue, is possible ; but it is evident and demonstrative, that many, from the contagion of these pursuits, will be entangled in such labyrinths of error as will lead them immediately to their ruin without a possibility of escape.

THAT train of consideration, that examination of cause and effect, which disposes the mind to deliberate with caution and choose with diffidence, is the lot of very few. Hence engagements originate, connexions are formed, and friendships cemented, in the moment of hilarity and mirth, the appearance of which is innocent, and the issue unsuspected. A vicissitude is soon observed, but not the least glimpse of criminality appears. Suspicion is lulled to sleep. One venial trespass is committed, and although it may be immediately succeeded by the bitter pangs of repentance, a repetition is soon excited by example, and approved by precept. A fresh commission renders the heart more callous, and it soon becomes obdurate. Repentance is forgotten, for remorse has lost its sting. Thus persons of virtuous disposition,

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sition, by being entangled in the snares of vicious company, become in time adepts in the practice of irreligion and immorality, and plunge with pleasure into scenes which they would before have shuddered at with horror and detestation. Caution is requisite, for example is contagious.

EVERY publication has a tendency either to disseminate virtue and excite emulation, or to countenance and encourage vice. As intention constitutes the fact; so every attempt to recommend the practice and facilitate the pursuit of virtue deserves approbation: and though the performance be not exhibited in the attractive decorations of art, or finished with all the captivating graces of excellence, yet the well-meant endeavour deserves all the echoes of applause, and merits the commendations of honest praise. But when the performance is evidently calculated to mislead, to misrepresent, and, instead of encouraging the practice of virtue, to portray vice in all the bewitching colours of fascination, to hold the lure of perdition before the eyes of the inconsiderate, and gradually to entice unthinking youth into the ruinous snares of vice and folly; what reprehension, what punishment is equivalent to the enormity of the crime! To animadvert with severity upon such a procedure, to condemn so odious a species of criminality with the

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the utmost force of language, has frequently no other effect than to excite the malicious sneer of contempt, or the more desperate tone of infernal imprecation. To what remedy then can we have recourse for the suppression of such an enormity? To no other than the civil power, which ought to be not only the guardian of our lives and properties, but likewise of our morals; for whenever there is a scandalous relaxation of morals, the effect will be proportionate on our actions. Thus thoughts produce actions, and actions are amenable to the laws. To act without deliberation, demonstrates folly; to act contrary to conviction, bespeaks inconsistency, if not guilt. A little reflection, in the breast of a rational being, would produce remorse; but experience shews, that thousands of individuals seem to be incapable of this exertion, although it is but a simple impulse of the power of ratiocination.

It is a melancholy fact, that the present age has given encouragement to several productions of literature which are written in defiance of religion, in contempt of virtue, and in open violation of the decrees of the Legislature. They are the ebullitions of corrupt minds and vicious hearts. To observe a periodical publication, continued from month to month, from year to year, issuing from the press, and publickly advertised, replete with immorality, and obscenity, is a disgrace

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grace to our police, and a lasting satire on the manners of the age. Fraught with all that luscious description which is calculated to inflame the passions and corrupt the heart, it is sought after with precipitation, and perused with avidity; the picture captivates the judgement and fascinates the understanding; and when writers will basely condescend to describe scenes of incontinence with every elegance of expression and vivacity of remark, it is no wonder if many gay and inconsiderate youths fall early victims to the prostitution of such pens. The integrity of the mind is gradually broken down by the perusal of such pernicious works, prepared for the admission of vice before the temptation approaches, and rendered, when it does approach, incapable of resistance; for the seeds of virtue being totally eradicated, no compunction follows the commission of the crime. Iteration sometimes produces pleasure, seldom creates pain. And thus an obduracy in guilt is confirmed; an impenitency in vice established. One crime engenders another; and what at first was deemed trivial and entertaining, becomes, from a continuation, culpable and vicious. So momentous is the proper employment of our time, that if we pertinaciously misapply those minutes which ought to be devoted to some laudable pursuit, the activity of our mind, the irregular wildness of an overheated imagination, will by insensible degrees pervert

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vert our original though virtuous intention, and lead it spontaneously into the paths of dereliction.

A NOVEL, whether founded on a real or fictitious story, may be made the vehicle of instruction and amusement, from whence the aged may derive delight, and the young receive direction ; and which the unsullied eye of chastity may peruse with pleasure, without suffusing the modest cheek of innocence with the blush of shame. The picture of life and manners which is requisite to form a plot within the bounds of probability, needs not the recommendation of wanton scenery and lascivious amours. A story, though not conducted by all the deceptions of art, nor expressed in strains of elegance, may nevertheless be instructive and amusing. The morality which pervades the whole, will be conspicuous to every observer ; and even from a cursory perusal, the superficial reader may arise with his intentions ameliorated, his propensities corrected, and his judgement informed.

BUT when the work is calculated solely to amuse, where the passions are pourtrayed in lascivious descriptions, where the errors of the human heart are palliated by the charms of language, where the finest feelings of the mind are pathetically exhibited, and every scene of delinquency is corroborated ; it requires more fortitude, and sound philosophy, than falls to the share of the majority of mankind, to arise from the perusal without having

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ing contracted some little taint of corruption. The mischief may be latent, and at first scarcely perceptible, yet in a moment of inconsideration may acquire an impetuosity that is irresistible and boundless.

IN the following volumes, the unhappiness resulting from the arbitrary temper of a parent is attempted to be delineated. His opinions relative to the implicit submission of a child to the absurd and overbearing decisions of paternal authority, are shewn to be repugnant to the laws of nature, and the mutual dependance subsisting betwixt parent and child. That obedience which is authoritatively required by the parent, without ever consulting the inclinations of the child, even in the important article of marriage, is certainly productive of many evils. For while children are born with passions to stimulate, and inclinations to chuse, it is but reasonable to suppose, that they ought to be treated with some little deference and respect in an affair in which their future happiness is so closely interwoven. They ought to be directed; not compelled. The experience of age can take a larger and more comprehensive view of life, can form a clearer and more accurate opinion of effects proceeding from certain causes, than the impetuosity of youth is capable of: yet in the unbiassed decisions of nature and reason, this can confer no indefeasible right on age to impose

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pose restrictions upon youth which are repugnant to their immediate and future happiness. Let all duty and obedience, all love and esteem, be paid by a child to the care and tenderness of a parent, whose diligence and fostering attention cannot easily be compensated ; yet certainly there are impositions against which duty will revolt, restraints at which nature and reason will recoil, without deservedly incurring the imputation of ingratitude. Wretchedness and misery are poor equivalents for sacrificing our own opinions at the glittering altars of interest and ambition ; which, if voluntarily undertaken, should be borne without a sigh ; but if imposed, must excite our pity and commiseration.

FROM these considerations I conclude, that a child may recede from the determinations of a parent, without actually deserving the opprobrious censure of filial ingratitude. An ingenuous mind will not readily give offence, even where a magisterial inhibition produces pain ; and would rather suffer without complaining, than bear the odium of what may be deemed a rational opposition. For there are few instances in life, where it is not the incumbent duty of the child to sacrifice his own opinion to the superior authority of a parent, in order, if possible, to establish that social peace and happiness which ought to continue unimpaired between such near and relative connexions. Whether

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ther an uncontrouled indulgence of the inclination in marriage, in every station of life, would really be productive of mutual happiness, is a problem that requires to be demonstrated; and certainly, in a civilized state, experience will never be able to draw a definitive conclusion. The existing positive evils resulting from the inhibitions of paternal authority, might not be remedied or counterbalanced by any real good, as the certain issue of an experiment arising from the contrary conduct. Direction to young persons is indispensably necessary; and who so proper to stretch out the directing hand, as him who gave them being? Lenity will frequently have more prevalence than authority, and persuasion than force. Yet there is a strange perverseness in some dispositions, which can never be perfectly subdued, either by gentle or restrictive measures; and experience demonstrates that it is an enemy to the peace of its possessor, and a deadly poison to his happiness. The line of duty and disobedience, in most instances, is very evident; in some, not so easily discerned. Compliance will often ensure peace, but rarely destroy it: and this we ought to believe as an undoubted fact, that in a marriage establishment, the happiness of the child is the principal motive of the parent. If he err, he errs in the cause of tenderness and benevolence. But if, from a certain combination of circumstances, some degree of collusion be discovered; if ambition usurp the place of inclination,

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elination, and interest of affection ; a non-compliance with parental requisition is perhaps necessary, if not justifiable.

THE multiplicity of publications of a similar nature might preclude any apology for the appearance of more. There are few incidents in life which have not been pourtrayed, few traits of character which have not been delineated by the exquisite touches of several eminent masters ; so that there is little more left for their successors in the same line of literature, than to tread in the humble path of imitation. When this task, so humiliating to a man of genius, is performed with taste and judgement, the work, though destitute of originality, will be read by the intelligent with candour, by the judicious with indulgence.

INCIDENT, though essentially necessary to this species of composition, is not certainly the only requisite to fabricate a complete performance. Incidents, when combined and managed with art, serve to amuse the attention, but seldom contribute to inform the understanding ; but when a concatenation of sentiment and incident pervades the whole, the imagination is amused, and the judgement instructed. As *to instruct* is much more meritorious than *to amuse* ; so the reader who is accustomed to deliberate, will derive pleasure and instruction from a work which the careless and inconsiderate will deem insufferably dull and tedious.

To

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To be entertained, is pleasing ; to be instructed, profitable ; and should any individual, either as parent or child, reap the least advantage from the perusal of this work, the Author will think himself amply repaid for his trouble in the composition of the humble publication.

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considerate will deem infinitely dull and tedious.

T H E

D E N I A L.

L E T T E R I.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

DEAR SIR,

IN compliance with your request when I last saw you, I now embrace the earliest opportunity of acquainting you with the cause and place of my retreat. You hinted at our last interview, that the voice of fame, and your own suggestions, had induced you to conclude, that some important domestic connexions of a delicate nature, which had met with my disapprobation, must have been the cause of this precipitate and hazardous procedure. Your suggestions were certainly right ; but when I have explained the particulars, I hope the friend of my youth will not altogether condemn my conduct ;—a conduct that has hitherto been regulated by the standard of virtue and the laws of rectitude ; and although not free from many errors, and the lapses concomitant to heedless youth, yet I can with truth

boast, that it is untainted with the shameless commission of flagrant vices, or the unblushing profligacy of deliberate guilt. This you will probably deem the vaunt of egotism : but you know your Wilton. The experience of many years has only cemented our hearts more closely, and that affection which commenced with our earliest youth, has never yet suffered any diminution.

As a proof of my attachment to the rules of virtue, I scarcely need to remind you of the many attacks I have suffered from the devoted sons of pleasure, and the thoughtless children of infamy. Ridicule and argument have alternately failed in making a convert of me to what I ever held, and I hope ever shall hold, in the utmost horror and detestation. The former was used as raillery ; the latter in adducing proofs to substantiate, that the major part of the Christian World has for almost two thousand years been immersed in the labyrinth of error. Though I was well acquainted with the whole scope of their ratiocination, I never yet could laugh, but have frequently heaved the unavailing sigh of pity for those giddy inconsiderates.

THIS may perhaps appear like self-praise, and an attempt to exculpate myself, where there is no accusation. But probably it may serve to extenuate what by many may be deemed a crime, and what I shall develope to you without the least prevarication or reserve.

You well know that I have been seven years from England ; during which time I have visited all the principal cities in Europe, examined all the curiosities which are there exhibited, and conversed with men and things solely for the acquisition of knowledge.

ledge. Treading on classic ground, every day increased my avidity ; and had I not received a peremptory command from my honoured father to return, I know not to what length my absence might have been extended.

WHILE I was at Florence a second time, actually meditating a journey into Egypt, and concerting measures for my conveyance, I received a letter from my father, couched in a very authoritative style, commanding my immediate return, and assigning as a reason for his command, that he had affianced me to the daughter of Sir George Silvertop.

THIS commercial dealing in matrimonial affairs, you know, I always disapproved of, from its interested views, from its similitude to buying and selling, and the more than probability of no affection existing between the parties thus connected. In conformity however to the commands of my father, I made immediate preparation for my departure ; and though my heart was altogether free from any pre-engagement, yet my mind foreboded, as it were by anticipation, that this would not be the woman of my choice ; for love, which ought to be free and unfettered, not bound by the shackles of authority, nor influenced by avaricious motives, ever spurns at the magisterial dictates which proceed from what the world calls prudential considerations.

A YOUNG person of family and fortune, whose discretion is unimpeached, whose conduct has hitherto been irreproachable, and who is deemed capable in all other matters to steer his course through life with credit to himself and comfort to his relations, ought certainly to have a negative at least in the important case—of marriage—upon which his chief happiness

in this world so materially depends. You will say, that this sentiment is natural and philosophical, but perhaps not prudential. So conclude our parents, and so have thought some of our Legislators.

IN this train of thinking I arrived at Wilton-Hall, fully determined, after a variety of deliberations, not to sacrifice my happiness by an implicit obedience to my duty. To lead a woman worthy of all my love, amiable for every perfection, and deserving of all praise—to lead her to the sacred altar of Hymen, sacred by the laws of heaven, and revered by the laws of man, when, thus circumstanced, I could not bestow my heart where I bestowed my hand, would be not only an insult to the decrees of the Divinity, but basely to trample upon the wisdom of ages. O my Benfield ! how often have we discussed this subject, merely for the exercise of our intellectual speculations ! Little did I then think that I should one day forfeit the affection of my father, for an attachment to opinions which are founded on the precepts of impartial justice and the dictates of unbiassed reason. But so it has happened. Affection ! duty ! what are ye ?

THESE are digressions, I acknowledge, but you must forgive them.

THE usual salutations and enquiries after the health of the family being over, my father abruptly asked me when I would fix my wedding-day. I cast a look of complacency upon him at so extraordinary an interrogation, and replied, that I humbly hoped he would permit me to see my destined bride before I came to such a determination. He answered sharply, “Your duty in this business is to obey ; mine to command. Sir George and I have settled the whole of the business to our mutual
“ satisfaction.

“ satisfaction, and it only remains with you to act in
“ obedience to our decisions.”

I WAS proceeding to urge some arguments which I deemed to be rational and conclusive, when my mother interrupted me, and said, “ My Lord, I conceive you have forgotten that Sir George Silver-
“ top and his family are totally strangers to our
“ son Henry ; they have only resided in our neighbourhood three years, and Henry hath been absent
“ seven.”---

“ THE remark is just,” replied his Lordship, “ and though the marriage be finally determined
“ on, the time which a visit or two to Sir George’s
“ may require, to satisfy his youthful curiosity, can
“ be of no moment ; therefore I allow you,” continued he addressing himself to me, “ seven days ;
“ at the expiration of which I expect your unconditional acceptance of the happiness I have provided for you. The experience which I have
“ had through a life chequered with a variety of
“ scenes convinces me, that I have left nothing incomplete in this important business. Your fortune is not large, her’s is affluent ; your family
“ is noble, her’s but lately emerged into notice.
“ Such a connexion will be advantageous to you, and
“ honourable to her.”

THIS speech being pronounced with a grave emphatic tone, and determined manner, commanded my silence ; and my father immediately left the room.

HAVING protracted this letter to an unusual length, I shall conclude with assuring you, that

I am Your’s, &c.

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LET

LETTER II.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

MY father having retired, a profound silence ensued for some minutes, during which I sat ruminating in a very serious mood on the strange reception I had met with after so long an absence. "Can there be a greater absurdity," said I to myself, "than for a parent to compel the inclinations of his child to accept what is absolutely disagreeable, and repugnant to his wishes, merely to gratify the aspiring throb of ambition, or the sordid grasp of avarice? O Happiness! what are thy bounds, where dost thou begin, or where dost thou terminate? in an implicit obedience of obsequious duty, or in the uncontrouled fruition of inclination?"

In the midst of this silent soliloquy I was interrupted by my honoured mother, who, with a look that displayed her affection, mingled with the most tender regard, spoke as follows: "My dearest Henry, you have been absent seven years; during which long term I never openly expressed my dissatisfaction, or uttered a discordant murmur, lest your father should have construed it into a wish for your return. O Henry! you have from the first dawning of your thought ever experienced my indulgence. With the most tender solicitude I watched over your infancy, and with all the joy of the fondest parent I saw you rising to maturity. In compliance with your ardent wishes, and in hopes of your intellectual improvement, I restrained my feelings, suffered you to be torn from these

“ these arms, and submitted to pine and languish
 “ under the piercing throes which I was conscious a
 “ long separation would inflict. You are now re-
 “ turned. Let me conjure you to give, if it be pos-
 “ sible, a ready acquiescence to your father’s will. You
 “ must be conscious, that nothing could have in-
 “ duced him to promote this matrimonial connexion,
 “ but his parental anxiety to give you a permanent
 “ establishment in life, and enable you to maintain the
 “ splendour of your antient house with a dignity
 “ suitable to its rank and honour. If you have
 “ formed no improper connection that biasses your
 “ inclination, let not a tender mother entreat in vain;
 “ let her not complain of ingratitude from a son,
 “ whose happiness from the moment of his birth she
 “ has promoted with the tenderest sensibility.”

DURING the first part of this affectionate speech
 I kept my eyes fixed upon the floor, but raising them
 almost involuntarily, I riveted them upon the face of
 the venerable speaker. Towards the conclusion, I
 saw the tear glisten in her eye: I rose, and stepping
 towards her just as it began to roll down her aged
 cheek, I kissed it away. My heart was full—I
 heaved a sigh, and walked to the window. My con-
 fusion was apparent, and my feelings—O Benfield!
 re-consider the scene, and spare me the description. A
 temporary pause ensued: I recovered my resolution,
 and on turning round saw my ever-honoured mother’s
 face suffused in tears, and my two sisters overwhelmed
 with sympathetic sorrows.

AFTER two or three efforts to speak, I begged
 pardon for having been the involuntary cause of the
 slightest pain to the best of parents; and assured her,
 that from a proper sense of my duty, and a pride of
 rectitude, I never would disgrace, by an improper al-

liance, the dignity of my birth, or the untainted honour of my family.

JUST as I had finished this asseveration, my father entered the room, and with a countenance more placid than when he left us, but in a very laconic manner, informed me that I must prepare to visit Sir George Silvertop's family on the morrow; adding, that I should then have at least the *satisfaction*, if not the *pleasure*, of seeing my intended bride. I made no reply, but notified my assent by a most respectful bow.

THE conversation now took a general turn, and assumed a different appearance: the diffidence, mistrust, and distant respect which had before prevailed, gave place to effusions of fond familiarity, and the delightful reciprocations of affability and esteem. To the many kind interrogatories relative to my pursuits, my amusements, and my studies, whilst abroad, I gave ready and ingenuous answers, which seemed to diffuse an agreeable pleasure to the whole little circle; and we parted in the evening, with all the external satisfaction of which separate views and discordant opinions can participate.

BUT when I had retired to my chamber I found my mind was ill at ease; and having walked a few times over the floor, in the vain hope of calming my disordered thoughts, I sat down, and, in the midst of perturbation, endeavoured to take an impartial view of that state, which my father had either kindly or officiously planned out for me. I wished to divest myself of prejudice, and all previous bias; and hoped, by a candid and ingenuous investigation, to decide against myself, and acknowledge the error of attempting to expostulate with commands which, CUSTOM
says.

says, ought to be obeyed without any previous examination or delay. But when I remonstrated with myself, for not immediately complying with principles which had been early inculcated into my mind, and subscribing to that which I had been taught as an irrefragable duty, I found that both my reason and judgement revolted at the idea, and readily offered a variety of arguments to prove the futility of maxims, the fatal tendency of which, when too implicitly relied upon, has been productive of irreparable mischief and unsuspected criminality.

THE duty which a child owes to a parent certainly has bounds, the transgression of which on the part of a parent may justify a child from the odious imputation of disobedience. The mind of a parent is taught by observation and experience, that a child without his instruction may in many important concerns of life probably be guilty of egregious errors. Impressed by this idea, which is certainly just, the parent hopes, by salutary admonition, to point out the rocks upon which the intemperance of youth is likely to suffer shipwreck, and to delineate those destructive vices and pernicious follies, which, like a whirlpool, envelope the thoughtless and inconsiderate in the inextricable labyrinth of perdition. — Thus far it is the incumbent duty of the child to pay a cheerful obedience to the precepts he receives, and rapturously rely on that solicitude which fed, watched over, and protected his infancy; and which now in the advanced years of maturity, anxiety, and concern, endeavours to lead him with safety through the snares, the intricacies, and the fatigues of life. But in so important an affair as love and marriage, where the affections ought to be chiefly consulted as sole judges in the arbitration, to force a union and require an un-

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conditional

conditional submission to the imperious dictates of parental authority, is certainly a stretch of power beyond that which either nature or reason allows.—O Benfield! it is my duty to love, to reverence, to obey my parent! He certainly loves me; from whence then does this anxiety to make me miserable proceed? Has a child no inclinations, or, having them, is he restrained from indulging them even in the cause of virtue? Ought he to be merely passive, and moved mechanically by the external impulses of duty and obedience?

LIFE is but too pregnant with examples which militate against this doctrine. Marriages concluded without love are seldom productive of content. Indifference succeeds enjoyment. Coolness promotes strife, contention, and ill-nature. Separation is the only lenitive; but how is this separation to be obtained? By a course of criminality and vice, which, however fashionable, and varnished with the specious epithet of Pleasurable Follies, is nevertheless to be execrated, as derogatory to religion, and destructive of the best interests of morality.

DISTRACTED betwixt duty and judgement, I passed the night in the most uncomfortable manner. Sometimes I determined to comply with my father's commands without hesitation or remonstrance; but INDIFFERENCE immediately occurred to my memory, with all her concomitant train of evils, and my mind revolted at the idea with horror. Again I thought of disobedience, with all its attendant consequences; displeasure, forfeiture of affection, alienation, and perhaps a total banishment.—Torn with these discordant agitations, I threw myself upon my bed, but sleep never visited my eyes: my thoughts were unsettled: a chilly languor overwhelmed me: tho' awake, I lay in a real state of dull torpidity.—The cock crew; the sound

found pierced my ears, and once again recalled my senses to their proper action; my scattered thoughts resumed a train of reasoning, and I broke out into the following soliloquy.—

“HAPPY, happy, happy bird! thou enjoyest the sweets of life, without feeling sorrow for the past or anxiety for the future, without a consciousness of its corroding solitudes. Instinct alone teaches thee to prefer the good, whilst reason, man’s boasted reason, is often so grossly misled, as to give the preference to pursuits, the completion of which is inevitable perdition.—Again dost thou rebuke me for disobedience? I own it is, in many instances, a crying offence.—Happy bird! I had almost said, I envy thee. The husbandman who listens to thy call knows by it that the hour of sleep is gone: he rises cheerful and exhilarated from his undisturbed repose—pursues contentedly the toils of the day until the dews of evening warn him to his home—again he sleeps—again thou rousest him—and thus his even round of life rolls quietly away.” But O! Benfield, I am weary with the description, and conclude as usual, that

I am ever Yours.

LETTER III.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

IN the midst of my nocturnal reveries, the rumbling of carriage-wheels attracted my attention. Looking out at my window, I perceived that the glorious luminary of day was several hours advanced in his

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journey;

So are your readers

journey; and while I meditated with surprise and wonder on the rapid progress of time, I received a summons to breakfast, which, with my hair dishevelled and wrapped in my *robe de chambre*, I instantly obeyed.

No sooner had I entered the parlour, than the eyes of the whole family were fixed upon me, surveying me with mute attention. Not conscious of any thing that could produce this survey, I was much disconcerted; when, after a pause of a few seconds, my honoured mother asked me how I had slept last night, eyeing me at the same time with a look of mingled pity and regret.—

“PRAY, Madam, may I be so bold as to ask, what induces you to ask that question?”—

“YOUR appearance, Henry, seems to indicate a sleepless night, or an improper inattention this morning to your person; but if I am not mistaken, the former has been your portion.”—

SHE looked wistfully upon me—my soul felt the sympathetic glance—it thrilled through my whole frame—the tear stood ready to fall—but recollection suppressed the filial tribute, and I promised, with a half-forced smile, to rectify any mistake which might have arisen from a venial inadvertency to my dress.

MY apology was readily accepted by the ladies; but my father expressed his disapprobation by observing, that such inattention was culpable, as it obviously intimated some disrespect to him, or an unpardonable forgetfulness of his commands: the latter he concluded could not possibly be; and therefore I was arraigned on the former charge. I protested with humility against his conclusion, and with apparent reluctance he accepted of my protestation.

BREAKFAST

BREAKFAST being finished, it was next deemed requisite that I should be equipped anew; and readily complying with the etiquette, I immediately underwent a tedious operation from a French valet, whom my father has long kept in his family, from a conception that he is more faithful, more alert, and more obsequious, than any of his own countrymen. To the last accomplishment he certainly has an undoubted right; but his title to the two former will admit of some dispute.

BEING thus metamorphosed from my morning dishabille, I stepped into the carriage with my father, and off we drove to the place of our destination. During our journey I received several cautionary aphorisms on the duty of children towards their parents, and the happiness which is the immediate and certain consequence of obedience, especially in matrimonial affairs; since it was perfectly consonant to reason and experience that parents who anxiously presided over the welfare of their children ought, from the superior wisdom which long experience of the world and knowledge of life had decidedly given them, to direct the inconsiderate minds of youth, and upon this subject especially to determine their choice. I did not chuse to contradict my preceptor, and therefore often nodded my assent to what I solemnly disapproved, being totally absorbed in the contemplation of my present critical situation, and fearful lest my remarks should embitter those hours which he meant to devote to the interested enjoyments of conviviality.

THE carriage stopped, and we were ushered into an apartment, where we were received by Sir George Silvertop, his lady, and daughter, with great formality and the most punctilious respect. I was introduced alternately to all three.—During the continu-
ance

ance of our visit, which was protracted to the evening, I was very attentive to discover, if possible, the prevailing bias of a family with which my father was so solicitous to contract an alliance. I soon perceived Sir George to be an open, worthy, intelligent man, with strong natural parts unimproved by education, and communicative of the knowledge he had acquired by travel and experience; for he had during several years filled some places of great trust and responsibility in the East Indies with honour to himself and satisfaction to his employers, and where he accumulated the very opulent fortune upon which he had retired. I had however the mortification to see this worthy man frequently contradicted by his lady in the midst of some narrations from which he seemed to derive the highest pleasure. Upon these abrupt interruptions he always discontinued his discourse, and yielded up to Lady Silvertop the thread of the story, which she lengthened with all the circumlocutions of the most tedious narration. This circumstance, with several other exceptionable traits of peculiarity, gave me no favourable opinion of her Ladyship's character. She was assuming without dignity, garrulous without communication, and contradictory even to vulgarity.

Miss preserved an inviolable silence, and seemed as if she never acted, spoke, or even looked, except by the directions of her mother: I therefore could not form any adequate idea either of her acquisitions or understanding. Her dress was splendid without elegance, formal without neatness, and costly without being fashionable. I have always thought that there is a criterion in dress, as in all other things, which ought to regulate, as much as possible, the votaries of fashion. Nature is an infallible guide, and the more you deviate from her restrictions, the further you wander from simplicity and approach to deformity.

formity. For these opinions I shall be severely censured by the fashionable, laughed at by the gay, and pitied by the polite, as void of taste and wanting in civility.

MISS SILVERTOP is far from being a regular beauty. She is tall, genteel, but ungraceful. When she was spoke to, she was very awkward in making a reply; not from diffidence, but from a certain uncouth manner, either natural or acquired, which cast a shade of ridicule over her whole behaviour. Though of a fair complexion, her countenance was fullen and forbidding; and when she at last unloosed her tongue, all her attempts at cheerfulness and hilarity were forced, constrained, and abortive. These observations convince me there must either be a natural defect in her intellects, or that her education must have been very contracted and unpolite. You will perhaps conclude that this description is the result of prejudice; yet I can with truth declare to you, that I have not attempted to heighten the picture by any variation from the original.

DINNER being over, and a few glasses having circulated, Lady Silvertop withdrew; and the old gentlemen, after some significant nods had passed between them, presently followed her example.—The disgust I had received from the peremptory commands of my father, was not removed by the specimens I had seen of my intended bride. Although my situation at present was precisely that which I had a right to expect, I had actually made no previous preparations for the intended interview: but, mustering up some resolution, I thought it more preferable to enter upon a conversation, however nugatory, than to sit looking one upon the other in a tedious suspense.

“PRAY,

“PRAY, Ma’am,” said I, “which is your favourite
“amongst the modern Dramatic Authors?”

SHE fixed her eyes upon me, but made no reply.

CONCEIVING that she had heard my interrogation indistinctly, I repeated it again very articulately, when her vacant stare and continued silence convinced me that my question was to her totally unintelligible. This somewhat disconcerted me, for I thought I had chosen a topic that was peculiarly adapted to her attainments, and with which most of the young ladies I am acquainted with are very conversant. I made a second attempt at a little rational confabulation by asking, to which of those immortal performances the *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained* she gave the preference?

AFTER a serious pause of some seconds, she answered, “Pray Sir, what are they?”

AMAZEMENT struck me almost speechless, when I reflected that a young lady of the age of twenty, with a fortune of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, should betray such total ignorance on a subject which is not unknown even to many children at school.

DESPAIRING of success on a topic of literature, I asked her, with a smile of familiarity almost dictated by contempt, what was her opinion of the new dresses exhibited on the last Court-day, as they were detailed to us in the public prints?

I HAD scarcely finished my question, when her countenance brightened, and she displayed so intimate a knowledge of all the etiquette of a Birth-day and Drawing-room; commented so *learnedly* upon the
finery,

finery, flounces, and furbelows that are requisite to decorate the persons of those young ladies whose highest happiness is to *figure* at the Ball on that occasion, that, before she had concluded her *elaborate* remarks, I frequently wished for the intervention of something that might stop her volubility: but having got upon a favourite subject, she demonstrated that she was as equal to the discussion of it, as she was ignorant of the former topics I had offered.

FINDING her communicative in one particular, I supposed she might be so in another. On this supposition, I ventured to touch upon the subject of our meeting, by observing, that I hoped she was particularly acquainted with the motive of my visit, so as to make any explanation on that head unnecessary.

SHE replied, her mama had acquainted her that she was to marry Lord Wilton's son; and what her mama said she never contradicted, for she was very sure her mama would do nothing but what was for her good.

“BUT, my dear Miss, had you no reluctance in
“complying with the commands of your mama, to
“marry a person whom you never saw?”

HER mama, she said, directed her in every thing, and she trusted she would never direct her wrong.

I APPLAUDED her obedience, yet observed, that some instances might occur, where her duty might suffer many severe trials. If she were commanded to marry a gentleman whom she did not, or could not love, her compliance was entailing misery and unhappiness on both the unfortunate parties.

SHE

SHE confessed that objection had never once occurred to her; but she confided in her mama's prudence, who would take care to provide a husband for her, whom if she did not love, yet she would marry, to please her mama.

THIS irksome and uninteresting conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Wilton with Sir George and Lady Silvertop; and after a short interval, the carriage appeared at the door. I had scarce taken my seat, when my father asked me, in a very serious accent, what progress I had made with the young lady?

"No progress is necessary, my Lord, as the young lady is all obedience to the commands of her mama."

"A NOBLE precedent, a noble precedent!" exclaimed my Lord with much vehemence. "I hope, Henry, this young lady's obedience will teach you your duty, and learn you not to receive with a fullen obstinacy the commands of a father, who has an absolute authority to impose any conditions upon a son, let him be never so refractory or contumacious."

I MADE no reply to this arbitrary determination, though I saw a reply was expected; for I was afraid, if I spoke my real sentiments on this occasion, I should, instead of conciliating, only irritate a disposition which was already too vehement.

He continued: "I perceive your discontent; but marriage will soon dissipate your chagrin; and if you do not meet with real happiness, you will at least be sure of opulence."

THE carriage stopped—I was released, and I will release you from reading any further at present.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

THIS night passed with little more relaxation from despondency than the former. Reflecting and debating with myself on the propriety or impropriety of not conforming to my father's magisterial commands, and on the probability or improbability of ever enjoying the least gleam of happiness or content from this projected union with a wealthy ideot, I determined that it was an utter impossibility; our pursuits, our education, our tempers being so discordant and incompatible. I then reflected on the consequence of my final refusal; but this was an event of which I durst not take a serious survey. It seemed to me a dreadful precipice, on which I was already elevated, and from which one hasty step might precipitate me, never more to rise. In the perplexity of this contemplation, I involuntarily exclaimed, "O man, how inconsistent, how fallible are all thy decrees! Opinion rules thee, and opinion deceives thee! Experience, that sage instructress, tho' ever present to guide thee in thy wanderings, and protect thee from misfortunes, is ever treated as an alien, and her instructive lessons disregarded! Strange infatuation! Strange, yet true!"

ON entering the breakfast-room, and taking a survey of the company, which consisted of my honoured parents.

parents and my two amiable sisters, I thought I perceived something on the countenances of all which seemed to labour for parturition. My father spoke with fullness and authority; my mother answered with unaccustomed gravity and distant respect; my sisters replied now and then with a faltering timidity, which obviously manifested some harsh restraint upon those dispositions which were ever lively, cheerful, and communicative. I had not sitten many minutes before a total silence ensued; and I perceived that their looks were attentively fixed upon me. I sat almost motionless, with my eyes cast towards the ground, and must have betrayed many symptoms of the confusion I felt; for, upon a retrospect of my manner at this instant, I cannot recollect one circumstance but what bespeaks the most ridiculous errors of an absent and uncollected mind.

WITH an amiable wish to relieve my distress, my affectionate mother addressed me in a tone of soft sensibility: "My dear Henry, I am afraid the air of your native country, after so long an absence in the warmer regions of *France* and *Italy*, affects your health; you seem to be indisposed this morning."

THE sound of her voice dispelled my reverie; and I replied, that though the climates of *France* and *Italy* were more mild and temperate than that of *England*, yet, as a native of the latter, I felt no hesitation in giving it the preference, as better suited to the constitution of an Englishman, unless debilitated by intemperance, than all the warmer regions I had visited.

"PRAY, Henry," said my sister Antonet, "if the air of England be better suited than—"

"PEACE!"

“PEACE!” exclaimed my father sternly; “this is not an hour to trifle—we have other business, that must not only be discussed but concluded, before I can allow of such fond nothings to be repeated in my hearing.”

THIS dogmatical declaration was received with the most profound awe and silence.—I saw the anxiety of her whom I deemed an injured parent—her feelings began to work; she heaved a heavy sigh; and casting a tender look of affection first upon me, and then upon my sisters, rose from her chair. She made a feint to leave the room, but, upon recollection, walked a few times across the floor, and again sat down. My sisters looked upon one another; then upon their mother, with all the anxiety of suspense, and seemed with their looks to ask for permission to retire. But this permission not being signified, they continued in the room.

To attempt a description of my own thoughts or feelings at this critical juncture, would be absurd, as nothing but tumultuous and disjointed ideas presented themselves to my distracted imagination—distracted not between hope and fear, for hope I had none, being too well acquainted with the inflexibility of my father’s temper, when prompted by either interest or ambition, to suppose that I could extricate myself out of the labyrinth in which authority had involved me—fear was therefore predominant: I dreaded the fatal moment, when he should require my assent to a union which I utterly detested; a union rendered more disgusting by the arbitrary manner in which my consent was demanded; sternly, and, as I conceive, tyrannically demanded.

THE moment, the dreadful moment came—I tremble at the recital. “Henry,” said my father, “you have seen, you have conversed with Miss Silvertop; you were purposely left alone with her yesterday, and while Sir George and I were finally concluding the agreement to our mutual satisfaction, I hope you had the resolution to acquaint the young lady with the motive of your visit, and your ready acquiescence with our determination.”

“MAY I hope, my Lord,” replied I, “that the union between Miss Silvertop and me is not finally agreed upon, as I have insurmountable obstacles to—”

“INSURMOUNTABLE obstacles!” returned he; answer me this instant, and without duplicity, Are you married? Hath some foreign virago cozened you of your liberty, of your affection, of your person?—But I will take such a precaution that she shall not cozen you of your estate. Answer upon your honour.”

“UPON my honour, I am not married.”

“ARE you pre-engaged?”

“I AM not.”

“ARE you in love with some other lady?”

“Not in the least, my Lord.”

“As you are not married, nor engaged, nor in love with any lady, and yet demur to accept of Miss Silvertop with so ample a fortune, your behaviour seems to me to be enwrapt in ambiguity. I there-
fore

“fore request an explanation, in order that your insurmountable obstacles may appear with some degree of plausibility, and your opposition to my will may be supported by arguments which are cogent and conclusive.”

“MY LORD, your knowledge of men and things, your researches into the human mind, must long before this have convinced you, that all restrictions upon the inclinations are nugatory and inefficacious. The will hath a certain prerogative, in the exercise of which it admits of no compulsory methods to corrode its happiness. It thinks, it acts with spontaneity; and when opposed, suffers a diminution of its pleasure. To think and to act with freedom, constitute one of the chief privileges of human life, when those thoughts and actions originate from the pure source of uncontaminated religion and morality.”

“HENRY, I asked you for your obstacles; you said you had insurmountable ones to your marriage with Miss Silvertop; and you have given me a dissertation on the prerogative of the human mind. This is no place to exercise your logical powers; you must give me an explicit reason, a definitive cause, why you object to this honourable union, that I may know henceforward how to regulate my conduct towards you. Speak---demur not!”

“WITH all deference to you as my parent who gave me life, with all submission to you as my elder in years, I beg and intreat you not to attempt to compel me to give my hand where I cannot bestow my heart. Insuperable barriers prevent our union. She has been educated in vulgarity,
“trained

“trained up in the most abject servility, seems not
“to have an idea beyond her toilet, and—”

“HOLD, Sir, not one syllable more of abuse. Your
“refined notions of politeness, etiquette, education,
“and courtesy, have led your understanding astray;
“and I must inform you, that a fortune of fifty thousand pounds is more than a balance for the whole
“of them. I will hear no more of your equivocations, but insist this instant on a positive acceptance or refusal; take heed, and beware of a denial.”

He spoke this with so furious a tone, and in so violent a manner, while he was rising from his chair, that it wholly discomposed and intimidated me. I cast a look of commiseration upon my honoured mother—she was sitting like a statue, pale and motionless. I rose from my seat, and, dropping upon my knees before her, conjured her to assist me in this distress: “Speak, Madam, speak to my Lord, and
“endeavour to alleviate this pressing misfortune.” My heart was full—my grief stopt further utterance—my bosom swelled with sorrow—at length my tears began to flow, and I experienced some relief. Casting up my eyes, I saw my loving parent in a sympathetic flow—I rose to apologize for my weakness, and administer consolation—I grasped her hand while she wiped away the tears from my pallid cheeks.

She trembled; then, with a faint and agitated voice, said, “May I presume, my Lord,—”

“Not one syllable on the subject,” returned my father, “but from himself.”

My sisters left the room, and, though commanded to return, I saw them no more.

THIS disobedience added vehemence to his irritability, and he demanded my immediate determination.

I HESITATED—he insisted.

“ My honoured father, forgive your only son in this instance, where his inclination cannot coincide with his duty. It is the first—”

“ AND the last time,” cried he, “ that you shall have it in your power to oppose my will. My will is, and shall be, an irreversible law to you. And here I solemnly forswear my affinity to thee; I reject and cast thee off, as an alien to my blood. May’st thou be an unceasing wanderer upon the face of the earth! May that earth refuse to satisfy thy hunger with the fruits it produces! and (falling upon his knees) may the great God of Heaven and Earth—”

WITH a violent, and almost involuntary motion, I flew to the door, resolving not to hear the awful conclusion of his curse.---I fled, and stopped not until exhausted nature sunk with fatigue. I threw myself upon the grass, and after a few ineffectual moans on my hapless and forlorn condition, a kind sleep closed my eyes, and I sunk into repose.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

HOW long I continued in this state of insensibility I cannot at present recollect; but this I can assure you, that I never slept sounder on a bed of down than I did with the cold grass for my pillow, and the wide canopy of Heaven my only covering.

I AM now convinced from observation and experience, that the real wants of man are very few, and those few soon supplied. Imaginary wants are innumerable, and possession, instead of satiating, only gives a fresh stimulus to the inclination. All that melancholy, uneasiness, and languor, so incident to a life of inactivity, spring from this source. Enjoyment, from continual possession, loses all its pleasure; hope is annihilated; and without hope there is no real happiness.

O BENFIELD! what is man! so various, so incomprehensible! this hour pursuing, with admiration and delight, what the next he shuns with the indignant glance of hatred and disgust. The feelings of aversion pass away; the same scene is again pursued, again enjoyed, and again undergoes the same scrutiny and condemnation. This strange versatility of the human species calls for reprehension; yet who shall be the censor, since we all participate in the degree or in the extreme of the failings upon which we animadvert. Whilst the passions agitate the mind with such a variety of impulses, the same inconsistency, the same improbabilities of character, will constantly

stantly recur to observation; and yet, destroy the passions, and you destroy all pleasures.

MUST I apologize for this digression? I hope my friend will peruse with an eye of candour, whatever slips of a similar nature may have fallen from my pen in the relation of this uninteresting narrative.

I WAS awaked by a rumbling noise, which seemed to be at no great distance, but of which, at first, I could form no distinct perception. I supposed it came nearer.—I arose, and, looking around with eagerness, I perceived a carriage that was driving with great impetuosity down a declivity towards the place where I stood. Upon its coming nearer, I discovered it to be the post-coach, and calling to the driver, asked him if he had any room. On his answering in the affirmative, I took my seat, quite careless of my destination, and alighted but once from the vehicle until we arrived at Morpeth, a little borough in the county of Northumberland. Finding myself much fatigued, my spirits jaded, my mind discomposed, I resolved to go no farther; and discharging the account of my conveyance, I took up my lodging at the inn, where I met with accommodation, entertainment, and civility, far beyond my expectation. Wishing to be alone, I was kindly indulged in my wish, without once suffering from the intrusive rudeness of the waiter, or the more offensive petulance of the landlord. I began to ruminate; but nature wished to repose; and I indulged her.

IN the morning, finding myself much refreshed, I walked along the banks of the river Wansbeck, revolving in my mind the perplexed uncertainty of my present situation, the disappointment of one part, the discontent and distress of the other part of the un-

happy family at Wilton Park, rendered unhappy and distressed by my conduct, which, if reprehensible for disobedience, I was not allowed time to rectify. Pushed on by the violent impetuosity of my father, violent to me only in this instance, I was not even permitted to try whether my duty or inclination would preponderate. This first act of contumacy ought not to have been considered unpardonable. Instead of those endearments, those affectionate greetings on the safe return of an absent son, what was my reception? Authoritative commands, against which I was not permitted to expostulate, and my acquiescence in which would, in all probability, have involved me in endless misery and wretchedness. The dearest and most tender of her sex was not allowed to remonstrate in my behalf. I feel—yes, I feel her pangs—I know her sensibility; but to whom shall she complain? My sisters, companions of my infancy, again we are separated! But when will the separation end? Alas! the thought is ominous—it may be a long, long time.—O, my friend, may you never experience the sorrow which now swells my throbbing breast!

THE morning was serene, the air tepid, the scenery pleasing and romantic. The little songsters of the woods were warbling on every bush; their wild melody was sweet, soothing, and agreeable: I felt some sensations of pleasure, by an attention to the irregular but beautiful appearance of the surrounding scenery; and found some little relaxation of sorrow by listening to the untaught, yet harmonious symphony of the groves. To indulge my disposition, I gradually ascended a grassy eminence, from which I enjoyed a beautiful prospect, that comprehended several miles of the country all around me. The most prominent object on the landscape was the ruins of an old castle,
which

which seemed to be mouldering very fast beneath the ruthless touch of time. The river Wanbeck rolled its little stream beneath my feet; the rocks rose in a grand irregular manner to a stupendous height, as far as the eye could stretch, covered with trees and underwood, whose foliage formed a scene of the most enlivening green. The little hamlets that were scattered over the face of the country, the cattle feeding in rich inclosures, the distant song of the chearful husbandman, contributed to raise my envy of the calm, the placid, the inoffensive pleasures of a rural life; which may be envied, but never experienced among the elevated scenes of pomp, magnificence and grandeur: alluring, but empty names!

PLEASED with the general appearance of the country, I instantly formed the resolution of taking up my residence in the neighbourhood, and patiently waiting the occurrence of some fortunate incident which might restore me to my father, to my family, and my friends. I espied at a little distance a farm-house: it was small, but neat; and while I was approaching, I observed first one and then another of the family come to the door, who, when they saw me walking directly towards it, immediately ran in with some precipitation. I rapped, and instantly heard a good deal of bustle and shuffling within, when, after a pause of a few minutes, a woman rather advanced in years came to the door. I asked for the master of the house. She desired me to walk in, and I was shewn into a little room furnished with all imaginable neatness and simplicity. The window and chimney-piece were ornamented with roses, pinks, woodbines, and other flowers, which diffused a most delightful fragrance; and while I was contemplating the beauty of these simple decorations, the master of the little mansion entered the room. On my turning round, he bowed, and desired me to be

seated. I immediately acquainted him with the motive of my visit, and expressed a wish to become one of his family, if he could accommodate me with a single room; assuring him, that whenever he wished I should remove, his single intimation should be my discharge:—he might name his own terms. He demurred, and seemed at a loss how to determine. I asked him, if one guinea a week was equivalent to his wish. He replied, he thought it more than sufficient. This business being settled, I became a resident in a rural and sequestered situation on the banks of the Wanbeck, at a little village called Milford-Grange.

I SOLEMNLY enjoin you not to discover the place of my retreat, not even to my sister Antonet. Let not your affection for the daughter betray the confidential secret of the brother; a secret, that probably may be prejudicial to my future happiness, or a means to augment it. All events are in the womb of futurity; but while HOPE, that pleasing seraph, is graciously implanted in the breast of frail humanity, we bear our misfortunes with fortitude, and patiently wait for a change to better times. This is a pleasure which is too often delusive, and cheats us in the moment of fruition. Yet Disappointment must confess, that Expectation has frequently enabled the unfortunate to bear with patience the incumbent pressure of inveterate evils. The long-wished for hour of retribution comes—Happiness is grasped at—Happiness is not to be found; she evaporates as the mist of the morning, and who is able to trace the airy phantom?

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

ARDENTLY desiring to view the rural beauties of this sequestered spot, I rambled the next day into the fields, and walked I knew not whither. My mind was more at ease than it had been for several days before, and I found myself capable of participating of the real pleasures which a variety of engaging objects constantly presented to my mind. The fields were covered with an agreeable verdure ; the fragrant primrose and the modest cowslip presented themselves at every step. The daisy, variegated with different hues, enamelled with its native beauties the ridge of every pasture. The Spring was in its glory. The trees were unfolding their fragrant buds, which shortly would spread a foliage, cooling, shadowy, and grateful, from the ensuing heats of Summer. The hawthorn was just bursting into bloom ; its freshness was cheering, its fragrance delightful. I was in a contemplative mood bordering upon melancholy, and a thousand beauties beamed from the surrounding objects, which I never before had noticed. There is a certain agreeable pleasure resulting from the gloom of a gentle sorrow, and the more it is indulged the more it encreases, invigorates, and persuades. Solitude and silence are most congenial to its impressions ; it seeks the shades of the one, the stillness of the other, and meditates with rapture over the sweet indulgence.

IN this morning's excursion I strayed some miles from my home, and in my return I entered the park of Sir Robert Bertram, where stood the ruins of the

old castle I lately mentioned. Though not an antiquarian, I felt a sudden impulse to enter and view the remains which had escaped the ravages of mordacious Time. The scite was strong, being built upon an eminence; whether natural or artificial, I cannot determine. It had once been surrounded by a moat of great depth, and was deemed impregnable. But, alas! what are all the boasted works of man! Those walls, once raised by the utmost efforts of human art, are now tumbling in ponderous masses from their elevation, and rolling down the precipice with a crashing impetuosity. The mighty masses that lie scattered up and down the inner area, the tottering condition of the walls that are standing, the pilfering hands of the sacrilegious peasant, the winding roots of some antient ashes which are slowly undermining the foundation, demonstrate the approaching ruin, the total destruction of this venerable and beautiful fabric.

WHILE I was contemplating the variety of objects around me, and little attentive to any thing at a distance, I was roused from my meditation by the sound of a female voice, which seemed to be at no great distance. I looked round, and perceived a gentleman and two ladies walking with a slow pace towards me. I inclined to walk some other way, but from a consciousness of the impropriety of such a proceeding, I continued in my original situation. They advanced—I moved my hat, and made my obeisance—they returned it, and stopped.

THE gentleman addressed me: “I perceive, Sir, you are taking a view of the solitary remains of this antient castle; there is little left to excite expectation or to gratify curiosity.”

“I CON-

" I CONCEIVE much more pleasure, Sir, in viewing
" this building in ruins, than if it had been standing
" complete in all its antient magnitude and strength."

" PRAY, Sir, may I presume to ask the reason
" why ?" returned the gentleman.

" THE ruins of this castle, Sir, demonstrate the
" stability of the government, the progress of civi-
" lization, the security of property, and the safety of
" the subject. The original cause of all those erec-
" tions was the direct reverse of what I have enu-
" merated. Since the cause is destroyed, by an equal
" balance of power between the governors and the
" governed, these castles, the baneful effects of the
" feudal system, are daily mouldering away under
" the cold frown of merited neglect."

THE elder of the ladies replied, " I think myself
" very fortunate in meeting here with so able an ad-
" vocate for the demolition of these old walls. I have
" repeatedly solicited Sir Robert to pull them totally
" down, and cultivate the land, which would then be
" productive of some good ; but while it remains in
" this condition, it produces nothing, and scarcely
" attracts attention."

THE young lady prevented my reply by observ-
ing, that she could never bring her mind to coincide
in the opinions of Lady Bertram, for that she had
always admired and felt a high degree of reverence
for the structures of antiquity.

" I WOULD reverence nothing," returned Lady
" Bertram, either antient or modern, but what is
" useful ; and pray what use can those old walls be
" applied to, my dear Olivia ?"

“ EVERY remnant of antiquity,” replied Olivia, “ is of sterling value. Though I view it not with
“ the foolish veneration or the minute inspection of
“ a virtuoso, who more frequently values it for its
“ rusty tinge, than for its real utility ; yet the man-
“ ners, the customs, the history of our ancestors, are
“ often more fully elucidated by these antient re-
“ mains, than by any written evidence or mutilated
“ record. These remains speak with impartiality ;
“ they are frequently demonstrative proofs of the
“ prejudices of the historian, and the predilection of
“ the interested individual.”

“ THESE observations,” returned Sir Robert, “ I
“ suppose will be conclusive with you, my Lady ?”

“ IF they are conclusive,” rejoined Lady Bertram,
“ they are not convincing. There is such a coinci-
“ dence of opinion between you two, in matters re-
“ lating to your antiquated notions, that though I
“ am out-voted, I am not yet convinced.”

LADY Bertram dropped me a curtsy, Olivia did the same, Sir Robert made a respectful bow, and they retired.

WHILE they were walking from me, I continued fixed to the identical spot where they left me, without any inclination to quit it. Before they had gone many yards, I turned round by a sudden involuntary motion to look after them. At the same instant Olivia looked back ; and perceiving me in such an attitude, she quickly turned away, as conscious of something erroneous in her conduct. I felt an unusual emotion, proceeding, I conclude, from a conviction of the impertinence of this curiosity. Impertinent it surely is, and ought to be repressed, from
a prin-

a principle of civility and true politeness. What motive can prompt any person to turn about and look after another, except to indulge some inquisitive humour, which should be repressed in the first impulse, and not indulged to the confusion of simplicity, or the embarrassment of innocence.

HAVING frequently, prior to this incident, condemned myself for it, I now felt the force of my own condemnation with so much severity, that I walked off instantaneously, covered with the warmest suffusions of shame and disorder.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR. WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have minutely informed me of the particulars of an unfortunate affair, which has thrown your family into the utmost distraction. I was partly apprized of the business previously to your information; but as I had only heard detached hints and obscure insinuations, I suspended my determination on the propriety or impropriety of the conduct of my friend, until I had a complete representation of the case; fully confident, from a long attachment and unsuspecting friendship, that you would not act from a momentary impulse, or the irregularity of tumultuary passion, in an occurrence of so great importance, to the dishonour of yourself and the derogation of your family.

Your father was too peremptory, and though unwilling to hear your apology, yet surely, as an

obedient son whose conduct had hitherto been irreproachable, he ought not to have attempted to put so severe a restraint upon your inclination, as not to allow you a denial in your choice, even before an interview with the lady. Such a proceeding is harsh, if not reprehensible : and, view it with all the lenity imaginable, sober prudence must condemn it, as the stretch of wild authority.

O WILTON ! a retrospect of past days creates a sweet, yet melancholy pleasure. In those happy days of infancy, what little artless pastimes engaged our attention ! what witless projects were concerted for our future happiness ! The sun rose to smile upon our pleasures, and set to gild our simple projects. Unwarped by the cares, the solitudes of life, we lived in a continued scene of unruffled delight. Young, healthy and inconsiderate, time rolled away unheeded and unthought-of. A constant attendance on the duties of the school, the greatest punishment to many a youthful mind, was rendered not only agreeable, but delightful, from a reciprocal emulation ; the fairest passion that can agitate the breast of a rational being. Those diversions which are ever pursued with avidity, were pursued by mutual agreement, enjoyed by concert, and concluded by mutual consent. How then did we sigh, and look forward to maturity, when all our little fantastic notions were to be realized ; when pleasures were only wished for to be enjoyed ; when every step to manhood was to exalt us, and terminate in our final aggrandizement, where envy might inveigh, but where care and anxiety should never find an entrance ! Vain surmise ! and perfectly worthy of those infantine imaginations which gave it birth !

MATURITY came—the phantom of Happiness vanished. Experience has now taught me, from the suggestions

suggestions of my own mind, from my commerce with the world, that happiness unallayed is not an ingredient in the cup of life. What a multiplicity of incidents, trivial, futile, and nugatory, is constantly attendant on the actions of man, to thwart his projects, embarrass his pursuits, and embitter his content! Single, and detached from their subjects, they are contemptible; but when combined, they are formidable and awful. The susceptibility of some minds receives every unfavourable impression with such aggravating circumstances, that it agitates their whole frame, corrodes the heart to its very core, and renders them fretful, uneasy, miserable and wretched, under incidents which insensibility, or a philosophic turn of thought, would seriously pass over unnoticed, or view with the coldness of contempt. This has made me conclude, that the peasant in the cottage enjoys more sincere happiness than all the appendages of opulence can bestow. His labour procures a competence, his temperance ensures health. The day passes without care, he sleeps in peace, and to-morrow brings no anxiety. Happy, thrice happy man! live thus and enjoy thy little! Affluence may envy, but it cannot deprive thee of those sweets, which industry produces and sobriety ensures.

THESE reflections you have partly taught me, by the moral and philosophic turn which pervades your epistles. Sentiments like yours are never lost, save on the thoughtless devotee or insensible libertine, who regard every precept which is repugnant to their indigested opinions, as the tart effusion of an ill-timed prejudice, or the illiberality of an improper bias.

I MENTIONED, in the beginning of this letter, the distraction into which your family was thrown by your sudden and unexpected departure. You may
be

be curious to know how I came to the knowledge of it, as you well know that I have for some time been an unwelcome visitant to some part of the family. Not to keep you in suspense, I will tell you how; and the inclosed from your sister, with mine in answer, will unravel the mystery.

THE day after you passed Benfield-House in the post-coach, when you had scarce time to inform me you would, with the utmost integrity and dispatch, acquaint me with the real cause of your departure and place of residence, a servant of your father's came with a letter directed to me. I no sooner saw the superscription than I knew from whose hand it came—my dear Antonet's! I had some suspicion of the contents, and that suspicion was verified upon the perusal. Another subject would have been more consonant to my wishes, but from your friendship I yet hope for a happy conclusion to this tedious and unfortunate attachment.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

BY the express commands of my afflicted parents, I write to you, earnestly entreating you, if you have any knowledge of the subject of our enquiries, that you will answer them without delay or equivocation. My dear brother hath left Wilton Park—yes, left it without the least intimation, or apprizing any one of his intention. He has now been absent two days, to the inexpressible grief of the whole family; whose

whose diligent searches and anxious enquiries in the neighbourhood have terminated in fruitless despair, and confirmed our first suspicions, that he is gone with a full determination to bid a final adieu to his native country. This unhappy resolution, though pushed immaturely on to it, hath raised our fears that he hath contracted some improper union in his long absence, disparaging to his accustomed prudence, and derogatory to the honour of his family. From the early friendship and unceasing attachment which have long dignified you and my brother with the honourable appellation of Friends; from your well-known correspondence during his absence, and many other incidental circumstances, we have conceived some faint hopes, that you may be capable of confirming or dispersing our fears relative to any previous legal or illegal matrimonial engagement, which may have given him a disgust to his native country, and weaned his affections from his own family.

UNDER this impression, will you be so ingenuous as to inform me, Whether, in the course of your correspondence, he ever made an explicit confession, or dropped a hint of any such connexion? Have you been able, from the perusal of his confidential letters during his seven years absence, to draw a conclusion that any such attachment influences his mind? An unguarded expression to an inquisitive observer frequently betrays the closest secrets of the heart. But whether you have made any such discovery or not, do you know the place of his present retreat? Whatever you know of this unhappy circumstance, do not hesitate, but divulge it, to alleviate the distress of a family rendered already but too wretched.

SOME time ago, you were apprized of the union that was projected by my father between the family
of

of Sir George Silvertop and our's. This was communicated to my brother while abroad; and though in the few letters which we received from him previous to his arrival, he did not express a tacit acquiescence, neither was his disapprobation so apparent, but that my father conceived the most ardent hopes of bringing this business to a fortunate issue. The event has proved as I expected; and what you have more than once expressed to me, now brings to my recollection your suggestions of my brother's absolute refusal. I hope you will lay no claim to the pretensions of prophecy, and therefore I conclude your intelligence must have proceeded from himself. From this idea only we conceive some hopes.

THE morning my brother left Wilton Park, we were all in the breakfast-parlour, and my father was pressing him to a compliance. My sister Sophy and I, seeing Henry much agitated, suddenly left the room. Returning about a quarter of an hour after, we were not a little amazed to see my Lord and Lady sitting in the profoundest silence, and Henry not present. My dear mamma was in tears, which, upon our entrance, she endeavoured in vain to suppress and conceal. I walked up to her, and enquiring the cause of her grief, she fixed her eyes wistfully upon me, and a fresh torrent of tears ran glistening down her venerable cheeks—she attempted to speak, but sobs choked her utterance. Thus overwhelmed with grief, she hurried out of the room. We were commanded to be seated.

“PRAY Antonet,” said my father, “where is your brother?”

“INDEED, Sir, I do not know; I have not seen him since I left him here.”

“So—

"SOPHIA," continued my father, "do you know where Henry is?"

"I do not indeed, Sir," replied Sophy.

"RING the bell."

UPON which my father's valet entered.

"Go to Henry's chamber, and let him know I desire to speak with him."

"He is not within, my lord."

"WHERE is he?"

"I do not know—I met him in the passage, seemingly much confused—He opened the front door—I saw him walk with great precipitation over the lawn—he has not since returned."

"OPEN the front door, and walk with great precipitation over the lawn!" exclaimed my father with much vehemence, as he arose from his chair, and walked hastily over the floor, visibly in great agitation.

AFTER a solemn pause of some minutes, my father said, "Thomas!"

"MY Lord."

"DID you observe which way he went?"

"I DID,"—

"THEN

“ THEN go immediately, and tell Henry upon his duty to return this instant, or he shall forfeit for ever, not only my esteem, but my favour and protection.”

THOMAS departed—I saw him run across the lawn; but soon lost sight of him: Hope, fear, suspense, alternately took possession of my bosom, and raised such a perturbation, that all the efforts of reason were too weak and ineffectual to allay the conflict. I looked at my sister Sophy—she arose and came towards me.—She took my hand in her’s, and with an affectionate manner said, “ Sister, you are not well—“ you look pale— your hands tremble.”—I replied, “ I shall be better presently; let us take a walk in “ the shrubbery.”

WE walked there for the space of two hours, expressing our hopes and fears, and casting many an anxious look over the lawn, for the return of Thomas accompanied by our dear brother. At length Thomas appeared, but Henry was not with him.—Fatal preface!—We hastened into the room, and waited with the utmost impatience for the entrance of Thomas. Our mamma had returned, and was sitting opposite to my father. She was silent, but sorrow was painted in her countenance; yet it was mild, it was expressive.

THOMAS entered, and with a look that bespoke his disappointment said, “ My Lord, I have sought the whole neighbourhood over with the utmost diligence, and have not been able to gain one syllable of intelligence—not a soul has seen him.”

My father beckoned to Thomas to leave the room; which he had no sooner done, than, addressing himself

self to my poor mother, already overwhelmed with the deepest sorrow, he said, " This disobedience hath
 " torn him for ever from my thoughts—every spark
 " of affection which I have hitherto cherished for this
 " ungrateful, this worthless boy, I willingly sacrifice to the coolest indifference and neglect. It
 " was my wish, the first wish of my soul, to procure
 " him a provision that was equal to the dignity of
 " his family, and to his pretended merit. He was
 " assiduous to contradict me. When I attempted to
 " compel him to acknowledge his duty, he fled; as
 " if any distance could screen him from the infamy of
 " ingratitude. You, Madam, always wished to have
 " the peculiar tuition of your son, insinuating thereby my incapacity for the undertaking. To gratify your caprice, I consented, and relaxed of that
 " authority over his infant years, which would have
 " produced now, when he hath arrived to maturity, respect, esteem, and duty. Thus it always was, and always will be, when a woman
 " usurps where she ought to obey; when she dictates
 " where she ought to listen; and attempts to teach
 " what she has never learned."

THE tartness and ill-nature conveyed in the conclusion of this speech, was what my dear mamma by no means deserved. This insult in the midst of her sorrow quite overpowered her, and she fell back in her chair. I ran to her relief—O Benfield! had you seen her, you would have wept—yes, wept over her.—Her face was as pale as ashes—her hand was cold—her eyes were fixed—now and then a heavy sigh burst from her agitated bosom—at last a convulsive shiver shook her whole frame. Sophia and I, drowned in tears, hung over the venerable mourner; neither of us knowing what to do, nor what to apply: we could only utter our grief in unavailing complaints.

plaints. Our falling tears had bedewed her cold, pale cheek. Sophia kissed her trembling lips—her breath returned, and a warm torrent of tears which gushed from her eye, gave a welcome utterance to her lips.

“ALAS!” said she, “where am I?”

I REPLIED, “In your own house, my dear mamma, and in your daughters arms.”—

“God be praised for this kind attendance, and requite the tender affection of my children!”

SHE arose, and embraced us both. She attempted to walk, supported by one of us on each side; and by our assistance reached her chamber, where she hath since continued mourning for her Henry's loss.

FROM this description you may conceive our distress. If your information can alleviate the misery, or administer comfort or consolation to a drooping parent and two sorrowful sisters, I know with what cheerfulness you will communicate it.

THIS letter has been perused only by Sophy; your answer will probably undergo a scrutiny by the jealous eyes of a parent not well affected to you.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MISS WILTON.

YOUR affecting and pathetic letter, describing the distress of your noble and worthy family, gives me much concern. I really sympathise in the sorrowful affliction of your dear mother—dear in every degree to her lord, to her son, to her daughters. I am no stranger to the tender affection which she always had for Henry ; a son worthy of every indulgence ; meriting, by his prudent conduct, the fondest attention from his parents, and the warmest applauses from all his acquaintance. Confident of his rectitude, and the uprightness of his intention, I dare venture to assert, that he will never deviate so far from the paths of honour, as to merit the title of an unworthy son of a worthy family. I am inclined to believe that he has not taken this step precipitately, but has weighed with mature deliberation, the probability of happiness or misery resulting from the projected union. If happiness were not to be obtained, what compensation could be an equivalent for a willing sacrifice to the pangs of misery ? Life is sufficiently chequered with good and evil, with joy and sorrow. Spontaneously to embrace the gloomy side of it, and thus embitter our days with wretchedness, is certainly indefensible.

How far inclination ought to bend to duty, I shall not undertake to determine. Different stages of life afford different views of the subject. The parent concludes that he has a right to command ; the child, that he has a right to chuse. But if inclination were more consulted, and authority less tyrannical, happiness would in all probability be more generally diffused,

fused, and the baneful effects of sudden separation not so universal, to the scandal of religion, and the infamy of modern manners. The source of every evil should be carefully investigated, in order that its defects may be speedily remedied; for the longer it is suffered to continue, the wider will its progeny be disseminated, to the establishment of error and the corruption of morality.

THIS principle may be censured by some, yet I believe it will be praised by many; and when the judicious and intelligent praise, the censure of the prejudiced carries no conviction. Custom, however, is a stern tyrant, ruling with despotic sway the minds and actions of the multitude, who often condemn her proceedings, though they coincide with her precepts. The arbitrary exertion of paternal power has not even the superficial plea of plausibility to plead in its behalf; and though its pernicious effects are daily manifested, still it is adopted, in contradiction to the dictates of reason, and the suggestions of humanity. Let age consider, that young people are endowed with reason to chuse, passions to indulge, and resolution to determine; and young people will then admit the boasted knowledge of experience, judgement matured by time, and a rational authority, to be the just privilege of age.

How far your brother has deviated from the direct line of his duty, is not apparent from your relation of the circumstances of his departure; and what cause may have induced him to decline an union that is so ardently wished for by his father, is altogether unknown to me. Your suspicions that some other connexion may have attached his inclinations, I answer with certainty must be unfounded; for otherwise I should have many and just reasons to accuse my friend

of

of duplicity ; a vice to which he is not in the least addicted. Though young, he ever had more fortitude than to sacrifice at the shrine of sensual gratification, and too much wisdom to devote those hours to the enjoyment of vicious pleasures, which he was conscious the attainment of nobler acquisitions would require.

He never dropped one sentiment in his letters from the Continent, that could give a colour for such a surmise. His pursuit was knowledge ; and his practice, virtue. I know him well ; I have long known him. I know that he has ever felt unfeigned affection for his parents, which is expressed in every page of his correspondence, and written in indelible characters in the recesses of his heart : could they read the feelings that are passing there, they would read with pleasure, and glory in the possession of such a son.

You wish me to be ingenuous—I hope you always thought me so, or this insinuation would add greatly to my discontent. I saw your brother ; he called upon me after his abrupt departure from Wilton Park. He was in a post-coach, but such was my agitation during the few minutes that he stopped, that I really forgot to ask him whether he was travelling to the North or to the South. He promised to acquaint me, by letter, with the place of his residence ; but what time may elapse before such a correspondence takes place, I cannot take upon me to determine.

He seemed, to me, to be much altered ; his usual hilarity had forsook him ; he was buried in thought, and very absent to my interrogations. This revolution could not have been effected on a mind so sedate,
so

so determined, so conscious of integrity, without violent internal struggles, and deep reflection. I remarked to him the alteration I perceived; but he made no answer to my observation. I enquired with anxiety into the cause of it: he answered with a sigh, grasped my hand, and retired. I had not resolution, or even the presence of mind, to follow him to the coach—but stood motionless upon the floor, until the hollow rumbling of the carriage dispelled my reverie, and announced the departure of my afflicted friend.

THIS is all I know of a man as dear to me as life itself—the companion of my infancy, and I hope the friend of my riper years.

MAY Heaven be propitious to my hopes, and restore him to his parents, to his sisters, and to your

W. B.

LETTER X.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

I PERCEIVE by your letter, and the two inclosed, what has passed at Wilton Park since my departure. Believe me, my dear friend, and I think you never had any cause to dispute my asseveration, my sister's letter has wrung my heart—it has given me more real disquietude than any other incident in the whole course of my life. The night after I perused it, sleep fled from my eyes, and the idea of my weeping mother was constantly present to my perturbed imagination. I retired to bed, but rest was a stranger to my mind. Restless and uneasy, I got up—I walked

walked over my chamber floor, revolving over and over the distress of a parent venerable for her years, and honoured for the tender affection which she ever shewed to her most unfortunate son. Unfortunate and unhappy now indeed ! I participate in earnest of all my mother's sorrows, but see it impossible to administer any consolation. Was it not hard that she should be insulted in the hour of anxiety only for her passive behaviour—a behaviour but too affectionate to every branch of her family, and amiable to the eye of every beholder ? Alas ! thou worthiest of thy sex forgive, O forgive thy unhappy son, who has, though involuntarily, added to thy grief and solicitude ! An opportunity to exculpate myself from the infamous accusation of disobedience and ingratitude, is forbidden me ; a day however may come, and may that day be not far distant, when I shall extricate myself with honour from these aspersions, and be restored to a family, whose dignity and interest it shall be my highest ambition to support.

THE supposition of an illegitimate, immoral, and irreligious connection, I hope you will disprove to my family, and to the world. I am not yet so abandoned or irresolute, but I can distinguish between vice and folly ; withstand the one with fortitude, and eye the other with commiseration. Fashion is certainly an insinuating and seductive mistress ; her votaries, who pretend that her joys are permanent and her pleasures exquisite, are many and powerful ; but let these pleasures be analysed by the process of cool and unbiassed reason ; let them be fairly weighed by her warmest advocates, and they will amount to no more than a constitution ruined by intemperance, a fortune squandered by excess, a premature old age, with all its concomitant weaknesses and debilities. This topic has frequently been the subject of our

examination, before the tainting breath of calumny had dared to sully the unstained reputation of our characters, and when happier days were the portion of your exiled friend.

I OBSERVE, that in my mother's distress, the only assistance she received was from my sisters, who, by the description, were scarcely able to support or console her, much less to alleviate her sorrow. Where was my father? I am afraid—but he is my parent, and though he may have erred, it is not my duty, as his son, to condemn him. I wish my dear mother would accept of my apology for his seeming obduracy.

You have acknowledged you saw me, but knew nothing at all of my destination. If you think it expedient, you may communicate the place of my retreat to my sister, with your earnest solicitations not to acquaint my father. This intelligence may probably restore some little tranquillity to the mind of my honoured parent, to whose welfare and happiness I would willingly sacrifice my own. The propriety of concealing from my father the place of my retreat is self-evident. He certainly is not inflexible. Let my mother watch the happy moment when parental affection, after lying dormant for a certain space, will return with double force; and I shall upon my bended knees implore his forgiveness, and give him a solemn promise, never to marry any woman without his entire approbation; only let him remit his intention of compelling my obedience to this inauspicious union.

How often is the peace of a family embittered and broken, and one branch of it alienated from another, by the mere force of opinion! Let us be as strenuous as we please in maintaining what we suppose to be right; but let us not attempt to enforce our decisions

or compel the judgement of those who have an equal right to think for themselves. It is utterly impossible that unanimity should exist in the free discussion of any principle; where Authority wishes not only to assume, but to exert a power which cannot be granted, without foregoing the privileges of humanity, common sense, and reason. Age may dictate, and sometimes enforce its decrees; but youth will reluctantly obey.

ONCE for all, accept of my apology for these digressions; they naturally result from the reflections of a mind that is oppressed with the deepest melancholy, and struggling under the horror which the imprecation of an incensed father has inspired. O Benfield! what could provoke my parent to such a degree of violence! what aggravation—But I feel that I shall be carried away by expostulation, and I will therefore relinquish this afflicting subject.

THE morning after my last visit to the old castle, I walked a second time into the park. There was something congenial to my present disposition in exploring those shattered ruins. The sentiments they inspire contribute to soothe my melancholy, and extenuate the heavy gloom that presses upon my mind. While I was walking among the ponderous wrecks that lay scattered within the inner area, the surface of the ground suddenly gave way, and I sunk up to the waist in a dry sandy soil. The accident at first alarmed me; but finding that I sunk no deeper, I immediately began to extricate myself from a situation equally ludicrous and unpleasant. At this instant, Sir Robert Bertram, his Lady, and Olivia, taking their morning walk, came to the place, and espied me in the situation which I have already described. The ladies screamed, while Sir Robert ran to my assist-

ance ; and by his help I was soon released from my temporary bondage.

ON getting out, I perceived something among the dust which attracted my attention, and on taking it up I discovered it to be a human bone. "Pray, Sir," said Olivia, "what is it that excites your curiosity?"—I replied, "It is a relique of antiquity."—She came nearer, with an intention to examine it—but on perceiving what it was turned pale, and shuddered at the sight. Lady Bertram, observing her, said, "Olivia, what is the matter with you?" She replied, "Look there."—Lady Bertram, seeing a human skull in my hand, shrieked, and threw herself into the arms of Sir Robert.

"Be not terrified, dear ladies," said Sir Robert; "here is nothing to strike you with horror, nothing to create disgust. Perhaps (taking the skull in his hand) this is the poor remains of one of my ancestors, famous in his time as a hero, a statesman, or a man of letters; or, probably, it may be the relique of a woman who was celebrated once as the beauty of her day. In these dark, hollow, solitary holes, may have glittered eyes which were in no degree, ladies, inferior to your own. Here may have pouted lips on which the proudest beau might have gloried to impress a kiss. On this cheek the lily and the rose may have been naturally blended; giving to the lovely cheeks on which they glowed the rapturous tinge of real beauty. Poor, last remains of cold mortality, I consign thee again to thy place of rest (throwing it amongst the dust)! Mayest thou lie in quiet there mixed with thy kindred dust, and no unhal- lowed foot disturb thee! Long hast thou slept in peace, and by the memorial which I shall erect, long shalt thou henceforth sleep."

THIS

THIS apostrophe being ended, we examined the place in which I had sunk down, and perceived by other parts of human skeletons which were mingled with the soil, that it was the remains of an ancient cemetery ; but which now had no other covering than a few withering branches of the solitary willow.

SIR Robert promised to prevent the like accident in future, by laying a free-stone slab, with a proper inscription on it, over the aperture. " And now, ladies," said he, " what do you think of the entertainment the morning's walk and this gentleman have afforded you ?"—

" INDEED, Sir," replied his lady, " the walk, as usual, has been agreeable, but your lecture was too serious."

" WHAT, Olivia, is your opinion ?" said Sir Robert.

" I ALWAYS regard, Sir, an incident of this nature as a *memento* of my mortality ; for as nothing is more certain than that one day we shall all mingle with our native dust, it is absolutely requisite that we should sometimes reflect upon this solemn scene, as preparatory to our final departure ; lest when death approaches, we should meet the event with cowardice, and leave this transitory scene with a vain wish to be indulged with a few more years to reflect, to amend, to repent, and—"

" COME, come, Sir Robert," said his lady, " come away ; if you continue to listen, you will have an harangue as long as the vicar's sermon."

“Go, you inconsiderate,” replied he, “a good sermon can never be too long; it is only want of attention that makes it tedious.”

He moved his hat to me, and they retired; while I continued gazing on the fair preacher, as they walked away, vainly wishing that she had moralized longer.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

ON my return home, I began to draw a parallel between Olivia and Miss Silvertop, to the no small advantage of the former. Olivia, from the short time and the few opportunities which I have had to make my observations, seems to be serious, contemplative, and intelligent; Miss Silvertop, to be giddy, inconsiderate, and uninformed. Olivia is serious, even on the most trifling subject; and, by a careful examination, attempts to draw some improvement from it. She is contemplative without sullenness, employing her thoughts in the investigation of objects which occur to her memory upon recollection, or what she has collected from the immediate recital of others. She is intelligent, as the certain consequence of the two preceding causes. Miss Silvertop is giddy, from an implicit reliance on the direction of her mother, which prevents her from the exercise of her own will, and renders her undetermined in the choice or selection of her pursuits. She is inconsiderate,

derate, from that indolent turn of mind which is the inevitable consequence of a contracted education; and which prevented the prompt exercise of those faculties with which nature has endowed her. Her want of information is not to be wondered at, when we reflect that the whole attention of her parents was bestowed in embellishing only the exterior of a child, whose capabilities of improvement in the useful scenes of life can never by these means be known by the most acute discrimination.

You will probably say, that I have drawn this parallel with the pen of partiality; and in the colouring of discontent have exaggerated the defects of the one, and heightened the acquisitions of the other. This censure would be of no force, if you knew the parties.

WHILE I was thus ruminating on this subject with some degree of pleasure, I received a card from Sir Robert Bertram, inviting me to dinner. The perusal of it inspired me with more chearfulness than I had for some time been accustomed to feel; and I returned an immediate verbal answer, that I would do myself the honour of waiting upon him.

THE messenger however had not been gone many minutes, before I found myself in a dilemma from which I was utterly at a loss how to extricate myself. My wardrobe, you must know, was wholly upon my back; and though not destitute of money, yet in the present instance it was of no avail, as it was not possible to make any new addition to my present apparel, before the hour of appointment would expire. I examined my present equipment with some attention; but how was I mortified to perceive, what I had not before observed, that the lower parts of my dress were

not only sullied, but actually spoiled, by my unexpected descent this morning. This observation determined me to send an apology for non-attendance, and politely to beg an excuse of Sir Robert for contradicting my own message without particularizing the motive of so sudden a change. Upon this I rung the bell with some violence, when my friendly hostess immediately appeared. I asked her, if she had any person at hand who would carry a card to Bertram-Hall, as I had received an invitation to dinner, and had unthinkingly accepted of it, without adverting to the inconvenience of my portmanteau not being yet arrived, or even considering the effects of an accident which had unluckily befallen me this morning, by which a part of the apparel which I was wearing was rendered totally useless. "Indeed, Sir," said she, "if I may presume to——"

I SAW she was much flattered, and begged that if she had any thing to offer, she would speak with freedom, without the least dread of giving any offence.

"INDEED, Sir (she continued), if that be the only obstacle, may I presume to remove it, by acquainting you, that I can accommodate you with apparel to supply the place of what you have spoiled this morning, and you are very welcome to them until your own arrive."

I FELT the offer as an act of friendship; cordially thanked her for her kindness, and accepted of the obligation.

SHE retired, and after the absence of a few minutes returned smiling, as if pleased with my acceptance of her offer; and "humbly hoping I would use them as my own"—she dropt a low curtsey, and left the room.

"THANKS,

"THANKS, good woman," said I, just as she left me, "thanks to the goodness of thy heart! Thou wishest to accommodate me in these trifles—it is really kind—but thou canst not ease the torture of a heart that is racked and oppressed beneath the heavy weight of a father's displeasure."

WAS it a hardship, Benfield, or only an inconvenience which I suffered in this instance of temporary want? I think it was only an inconvenience. A wise man should seldom complain, even when he labours under the pressure of real evils; for complaints may irritate, but will never alleviate the weight of woe.

I WAS soon equipped, and, having but a little way to walk, was soon at Bertram-Hall. I was welcomed by Sir Robert, and introduced to another gentleman, a Mr. Fennell, whom I had never seen before. He received my compliments with a visible coldness, and eyed me with a most minute circumspection. The oddness of this behaviour made me somewhat considerative, as I was not conscious of any impropriety in my present conduct. Lady Bertram perceived my confusion, and, obligingly wishing to dispel it, hoped I had suffered no harm or inconvenience from the ludicrous incident that had happened to me in the morning; "for I must confess," continued she, "it has afforded me a hearty laugh, to think how you were surrounded by the dust and bones of our old ancestors, while Sir Robert and Olivia looked at me with all the demureness and gravity of two *religieux*, reprehending my mirth as ill-timed and indiscriminate. For you must know, Sir, that if Olivia were not already in the high road of matrimony with Mr. Fennell here, I should really conclude she had fallen in love with you. Nay, Olivia,

D 5

"why

“ why do you blush so ? Did I not tell you, that I
“ would acquaint Mr. Wilton with all your praises of
“ him ?”

THIS raillery of Lady Bertram had crimsoned the lovely face of Olivia all over, and added much to her natural beauty. I perceived her confusion ; and the more I viewed her, the more I felt my own inability to relieve her, by feeling myself in the same embarrassed predicament. After a pause of some seconds, Sir Robert relieved our anxiety by saying, that though Mr. Fennell was an admirer of Olivia, and had offered very honourable and advantageous proposals, yet Lady Bertram had no authority to say that she was in the high road to matrimony, as there was some previous and very important business to be determined, before such a match could be concluded.

DURING this conversation, Mr. Fennell sat with the one leg carelessly thrown over the other, biting his nails. However, from the observations which were made by Sir Robert, he broke silence, and said, that whatever business of importance Olivia had to determine, he could not understand ; but the further his enquiries went, the greater the mystery appeared to him ; yet he thought Olivia competent to decide for herself. This was to me altogether unintelligible ; and though it excited my curiosity, where was I to seek for a gratification of it ?

NOTHING further of any consequence passed during the afternoon, except that I caught the eye of Olivia sometimes fixed upon mine ; and when she perceived I observed it, she turned away with some confusion, which I flatter myself was not artificial. I confess to you, ingenuously, I felt a pleasure whenever I caught her eye thus employed, and the faint tinge of
crimson

crimson which, in the interim, glowed upon her cheek, conveyed to my soul an inexpressible rapture. We parted in the evening, all agreeably entertained with one another, except Mr. Fennell, who seemed to taste no joy from the hospitality of Sir Robert, the chearful mirth of his lady, or the silent but attractive beauties of his mistress.

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR. WILTON.

S I R,

THE parallel with which your last epistle began, was certainly delineated by the favourable impulse of prepossession; probably not so apparent to you, as a party interested, yet very obvious to an unprejudiced individual. From my personal knowledge of Miss Silvertop, you have not exaggerated her defects; defects early imbibed from the mistaken predilection of an over-fond parent, who with the utmost solicitude instilled opinions into the tender mind of her daughter that may never be eradicated. The predominating desire of finery is very soon manifested in the youthful breast; and when this desire is seconded and encouraged by the over-weening fondness of a parent, it becomes, in process of time, a habit so firmly established, that it frequently continues the ruling passion to the latest period of life. To check this passion in the youthful mind, all cautionary precepts and prudential admonitions are found ineffectual: advice may be given, but it is ever given in vain, especially when it comes from the same person who

was formerly more assiduous to inculcate, than she is now to condemn. When the embellishment and adorning of the person require so much attention, the fatal consequence is inevitable ;—ignorance, in the highest degree, in every thing relative to life, especially prudence in external conduct, and œconomy in the regulation of affairs ; politeness degenerates into ceremony, and good-breeding into downright frippery. It is not every parent who is the most capable of educating his own children. The partiality of a father has often spoiled a hopeful son ; and the fondness of a mother, the amiability of a daughter.

MISS OLIVIA seems to be a new favourite : possibly from her accomplishments she may deserve it. Novelty has a charm that is very captivating, and we frequently wish to cherish it, without giving ourselves the trouble of examining whether the object is meritorious or not. This, you will perceive, is a general indiscriminate observation, without the application of personality. The young lady may be, and I hope is, among the most amiable of her sex. The specimens you have occasionally favoured me with of her conduct and intelligence, have already operated very powerfully with me in her favour. If I had not to apply the remaining part of this letter on business that is of importance to you, I think I could discover a secret to you, which in future may be deemed of some consequence.

A few days after I had dispatched my answer to your sister's letter, I was honoured with a very extraordinary visit ; extraordinary as it was unexpected. Walking on the terrace, and perusing one of your epistles, I saw a carriage driving towards me ; and as it drew nearer, I perceived to whom it belonged.

Agitated

Agitated at the sight, I withdrew into my study ; if possible, to compose myself before its arrival. It arrived—I heard it stop—and a message was brought, that Lady Wilton wished to speak to me.

I WENT to the carriage door—there sat the venerable old lady and her two amiable daughters. As soon as she saw me, she changed colour—her eyes met mine ; they were suffused with the genial tribute of nature—she then said, with a faltering tone, “ O, Mr. Benfield, where is my son Henry ! ”

SHE seemed to wish to say more, but her feelings overcame her. I desired her Ladyship to favour me with her company in the parlour, when I would willingly give her all the information I could, on a subject so afflicting. She kindly accepted my offer, and I hoped the young ladies might be admitted of the party ; which being granted, we walked in.

As soon as we were seated, your affectionate mother said, “ Mr. Benfield, without any ceremony, inform me where my son is. Is he well, and do you suppose he means to return to Wilton Park ? ”

“ My honoured lady (I replied), I am at full liberty to acquaint you with your son’s retreat, but under positive injunctions to conceal it at present from his father ; therefore, I hope you will not exact a breach of the sacred promise I have made to my absent friend.”

“ You may make any reservation of that kind you please (returned your mother) ; I should be loth to require a breach of promise, especially when made to my dear son.”

SHE

SHE hesitated—then sighed, and looked at your sister Antonet, as if she wished her to give me some assurance. But your sister remaining silent, she continued, “I promise you, Sir, upon my honour, I will “not acquaint Lord Wilton with any particular which “either you or my dear son wish to have concealed.”

SHE looked at her daughters—who both gave me the same honourable pledge.

IN this confidence I informed them, that you were settled in a village called Mitford Grange, upon the Banks of the Wansbeck, in the county of Northumberland.

“IN the county of Northumberland!” exclaimed “your mother; “what, so far north! Is he in “health?”

I assured her you were, as the letters I had received did not hint the least indisposition.

“I AM somewhat more at ease, (returned your “mother) now I know where my dear child is. He is “likewise in health! and may the God of his fathers “ever bless and protect him!”

HERE she cast her eyes upwards, with a rapture which bespoke the fervour of her pious soul. After a short pause, she addressed me again: “Pray, “Mr. Benfield, has Henry informed you that he “feels the want of any necessary or convenience of “life in his retirement, “as he left all his clothes “at Wilton Park?”

I THEN

I THEN related to her, nearly in your own words, the ludicrous incident by which a part of your apparel was spoiled, and how you were accommodated before you could wait upon Sir Robert Bertram. She was affected—Antonet looked grave—but Sophy relaxed into a gentle simper. Her mother, observing it, said, “Pray, child, do you laugh at your brother’s “misfortune?”

“No, indeed, Madam,” replied Sophy; “I love my brother, and that my brother knows; “I only smiled at the idea of his standing all “bedaubed with dust and dirt in the company of “Sir Robert Bertram, his Lady, and Olivia, and “yet never perceive it until he received an invitation to dinner. It was this made me smile, Madam; “—Mr. Benfield, do not acquaint my brother that “I laughed at his misfortunes; and,—sister,—you “know—”

HERE the affectionate girl fell a-weeping—
---Lady Wilton walked towards her, and, desiring her to compose herself, assured her that she did not mean to reproach her with any levity in this instance, or with want of affection towards her unhappy Henry: then turning to Antonet, said, “You, my “dear, will acquaint Mr. Benfield with the principal “occurrences which have happened since Henry’s “departure, that he may inform your brother of the “confusion which his retreat has occasioned.”

IN obedience to her mother’s commands, Antonet began: “You must know, Mr. Benfield, that “as soon as my father was convinced that my brother “was actually gone from Wilton Park, he retired to “his chamber, shut himself up, and peremptorily “commanded none, on pain of his displeasure, to “molest

“moleſt him, as he deemed all buſineſs, of whatever
“nature, impertinent, and beneath his care.
“Inflexible to all ſolicitation, he continued
“eſtranged from his family for ſome days. Silence
“and deſpondency ſat viſible on the face of every one.
“We were all mourners, without one friendly voice to
“adminiſter conſolation. The gloom of ſorrow filled
“every part of the manſion, where only cheerfulneſs
“and hilarity were accuſtomed to reign. In this per-
“plexity, Sir George Silvertop arrived, and ex-
“preſſed an earneſt deſire to ſee my father, who on
“being informed of Sir George’s arrival, and con-
“cluding that ſome important occurrence muſt have
“ſtimulated him to this unexpected viſit, came down
“into the parlour.

“As ſoon as he was ſeated, Sir George, with
“his uſual frankneſs, a quality characteristic of
“him, addreſſed my father in theſe words :”

“MY Lord, I am extremely ſorry for the
“unfortunate incident which has ſeparated the
“hope of your houſe from the reſt of your family ;
“eſpecially as this unhappy caſe ſolely ariſes from
“the union we propoſed to eſtabliſh for the peace and
“welfare of the parties more immediately con-
“nected, and of the families to which they belonged.
“We are diſappointed. Compulſory methods are
“ſeldom effective ; for where marriage is contracted
“without conſulting the inclinations of the heart—
“all hope of unanimity is deſtroyed, and the ſeeds
“of endleſs ſtrife ſowed between the parties. Is it
“not unnatural for parents to couple two young per-
“ſons together in the ſacred band of matrimony, and
“for life too, without conſidering whether they have,
“or ever can have, a real, or even any affection
“for each other ? This is a doctrine, you know,
“my

“ my Lord, I always disapproved ; and though by it
“ you have at present lost your son, he may one day
“ be restored to you, to your favour, and to the bo-
“ soms of a happy family. I deem it not an insult
“ to myself that my daughter is slighted ; though
“ some others do ; for Lady Silvertop, chagrined at
“ her daughter being thus refused, has again en-
“ couraged the addresses of another gentleman,
“ which were only discontinued after I had received
“ your honourable proposals. There seems to be a
“ fatality in many things ; and what we cannot ac-
“ complish, my Lord, with satisfaction to ourselves
“ and happiness to others, however we may feel the
“ disappointment, we ought to bear it with unshaken
“ fortitude and christian patience ; leaving the dis-
“ posal of events to an Omniscient Power, who will
“ order, by ways inscrutable to us, all things for the
“ best.”

“ HERE Sir George ceased. My father listened
“ with impatience to a doctrine that was not in the
“ least congenial to his own, and said, with a sneer,
“ How long have you, Sir George, been pupil to
“ my son ? That latitude of obedience which you
“ would allow, would ruin all the noble families in
“ Britain, not only from a connivance at, but an en-
“ couragement to illicit connexions, and disparaging
“ mixtures, by which the purest blood of the best
“ families would be contaminated and degraded.
“ However you may think and act, Sir George, I
“ shall always insist upon an implicit obedience to
“ my commands in matrimonial matters ; it is my
“ duty to chuse, my children’s to comply ; and here
“ I solemnly swear to you, that my son shall marry
“ your daughter, or not only incur my eternal dis-
“ pleasure, but shall live for ever under the unre-
“ pealed imprecation of an incensed parent.”

“ SIR

"SIR George replied, "I mean not, my Lord, to controvert your opinion; you may enjoy it, for me, uncontrouled; but this I can assure you, that I would not force the inclinations of my daughter, to seat her upon a throne."—

"FOLLY," returned my Lord, "downright folly, Sir George! I wonder to hear a man of your experience in life talk so inconsiderately. What is life without distinction—what is it without enjoyment? How can you be distinguished without opulence? or how can you enjoy the pleasures of life without honourable connexions? And must all this be sacrificed to inclination? Away with such foolery, Sir George. Learn to know the world, and then you will know how to use it."

"ALL this time, my father was walking over the floor with a very quick pace. Sir George seemed not a little disconcerted at his violence, and modestly said, "I believe, my Lord, I could easily confute your opinions, both from the wisest of the ancients and the most learned of the moderns."

"ANCIENTS and moderns!" replied my father, with more vehemence than ever, "what have they to do with the direction of my family?"

"SIR George was silent--confusion was in his looks—which my dear mother perceiving, said to him, "And pray, Sir George, may I take the liberty to ask, who the gentleman is you lately mentioned, to have renewed his addresses to Miss Silvertop?"

"HE is a Capt. Thornton," replied Sir George, "a favourite of Lady Silvertop, and seemingly no way disagreeable to my daughter."

"AFTER

“ AFTER some more uninteresting conversation,
“ Sir George took his leave ; my father likewise
“ withdrew, and the next morning, without ac-
“ quainting one individual of the family with his
“ intention, set off for London. During his absence
“ we have taken the favourable opportunity to wait
“ upon you, Mr. Benfield, to learn what hath befall-
“ en our unfortunate brother.”

THE lovely Antonet ceased ; when your mother added, “ She has given a true recital, and you are at
“ full liberty to make what use of it you please in your
“ future correspondence with my dear child : and
“ let me conjure you, Mr. Benfield, by the prayers
“ of an afflicted mother, to let me know, from time
“ to time, the particulars of his wretched case. The
“ happy hour may come, but oh ! I am afraid it is
“ at a great distance, which may restore him to my
“ arms, to be a comfort to my old age, and an ho-
“ nour to my grey hairs.”

SHE sighed deeply as she spoke the last words
—she wished to conceal her sorrow—her wish was vain—it was but too visibly depicted on her countenance. Amiable woman ! with some difficulty she gave me the following charge :
“ Will you be so obliging as to accommodate my
“ Henry, and your friend, with what may be re-
“ quisite for him to support himself with ease and re-
“ spectability during his unhappy exile ? and what-
“ ever obligation of this kind you may lay me under,
“ I will repay, and with unfeigned thankfulness.”

“ MY Lady,” I replied, “ you have conferred a
“ talk upon me, which I shall perform with pleasure
“ to my friend ; but I have long wished to style him
“ by a more tender name.”

HERE

HERE I walked towards my charming girl, and gently took her by the hand. She blushed, and gave me such a look of tenderness, as thrilled through my very soul.

"MR. Benfield (returned your mother), you know the obstacle—my Lord—but live in hope."

HERE the whole party arose—I conducted them to the chariot—I followed it with my eyes as it drove away, and conveyed from me the only object of my wishes, and on whom my temporal happiness entirely depends. This is no new subject to you, and therefore I shall not trouble you with any of my complaints.

You will remember to make use of the power which is consigned to me by your mother; you know it was unnecessary, nevertheless it shews her affection.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE recital of many incidents which your last contains, has really affected me. I see the unfeigned love of my dear mother, the affection of my sisters, and the rigorous inflexibility of my father. What motive could have prompted the latter to take this journey to London? It bears an unfavourable aspect; may my ominous fears be in vain! The candour and ingenuousness of Sir George Silver-

top

top I admire and revere, not only from a congeniality of sentiment, but because they are natural, they are rational. His character, I perceive, improves upon me, by a minute acquaintance; it expands from an unfortunate exigence, and glows by collision. In this instance, he has acted with all the greatness of the Christian, and the Philosopher. He wished to console; he wished in vain. He spoke with wisdom; he spoke in vain. Amiable man!

ACQUAINT my sweet little Sophy, that she has not offended me. I know and have experienced the tenderness of her heart. Tell her, I have laughed myself more than once, on the bare recollection of the circumstance. My appearance was ludicrous enough, and when pourtrayed in her fertile imagination might easily raise a smile.

I SHALL now proceed with my own important adventures.

BEING informed there was great plenty of trout in the River Wansbeck, I procured a rod, and entertained myself by angling. Though never very dexterous at the diversion, I had some pastime. But being soon tired I sat down upon the green margin of the stream to enjoy a more solid pleasure, from the perusal of a new edition of HORACE by the learned Jani. Attentive to my reading, I was insensible to every thing around me, until I was startled suddenly by the fall of something across my legs, as I was lying on the ground. I looked up, and saw it was my own fishing-rod, which a pretty little boy had taken up to examine, and by chance had let it fall. The length of the grass, and my own attention, prevented me from hearing him until he was in my presence. He seemed to be about four years of age, of
a fair

a fair complexion, tinged with a little red upon his cheeks. His eyes were large and full, of a light blue colour, which shed a lustre, at once pleasing and captivating. His countenance was open and placid, and shaded with a quantity of flaxen hair, which waved carelessly over his shoulders. He was dressed in a suit of green, and held a bunch of cowslips in his hand.

BEING struck with the appearance of this little cherub, I said to him, "My dear little boy, what are you doing here alone?" He answered, with a mildness that really charmed me, "I am gathering cowslips for my mamma."—"And what does your mamma do with them?"—"She puts them among water in the flower-pots, and sets them in the parlour."—"And what do they call your mamma?"—"They call her Mrs. Brooke."—"And where does she live?"—"She lives at home."

THE infantine simplicity of this answer pleased me wonderfully; when taking the little wanderer by the hand, and seating him by me, I asked him, if his mamma was not afraid to let him come and gather cowslips by himself? "Yes," says he, "mamma would be afraid, if she knew I was by myself; but Miss Livy was with me when I came from home. She stopped to speak to Lady Bertram, and I came to gather cowslips."—"Will you take me home with you to your mamma?"—"Yes," said he, "if Miss Livy does not come, you shall go and see mamma and papa too."

AFTER a good deal more of this innocent prattle, continued on purpose to prolong the time, and seeing nothing of Miss Livy, as my little stranger called her, I arose and requested him to lead me to his papa. He cheerfully took me by the hand, and said, "Come

"then,

“ then, we must go this way.” We had not walked far, before he exclaimed with much exultation, “ Yonder’s Miss Livy !” and off he ran to meet her, as fast as his little legs would carry him.

SHE snatched him up in her arms, and, kissing him, said, “ You little rogue, where have you been ? I have been seeking you this half hour.” — “ I have,” replies he, “ been gathering cowslips with yon gentleman, and now he is going to my mamma and papa, and you must go too.”

BEING come up to Olivia, and accosting her with the pleasure I had received from my conversation with her little companion, I desired to know to whom he belonged.

OLIVIA replied, “ He is the son of the Rev. Mr. Brooke, the vicar of the parish, one of the worthiest of his worthy tribe, whose house stands contiguous to Sir Robert’s.”

SHE had scarce concluded, when our little prattler said, “ Miss Livy, why don’t you put your arm through the gentleman’s when you are walking, the same way you do with my papa, and with Sir Robert ?”

I COULD not help smiling at the archness of the observation, while Olivia seemed in the utmost confusion, and at a loss what reply to make him.

He repeated his request, when she replied to him, “ My dear child, don’t you know that your papa and Sir Robert are my old acquaintances, and married gentlemen ? but this gentleman is a stranger, and therefore to do what you bid me, would be quite improper.”

WE were by this time come to the path-way which leads to the vicarage, when Olivia wished me a good morning, and was retiring ; but my little innocent, seizing her hand, said, “ No, Miss Livy, you shall not go home, until you go with this gentleman to my papa. You say he is a stranger ; he will not know how to open the gate, you know— I cannot open it—come, go and open it for us.”

I took this opportunity, and, addressing myself to Olivia, said, “ If it be not inconvenient, Madam, I shall esteem it as a particular favour if you will introduce me to Mr. Brooke ; I am no stranger to his general character as a clergyman, and as a scholar. I wish to be acquainted with him ; he will be a rational and intelligent companion. I wish for his advice in more cases than one.”

As I pronounced these last words, I fixed, by a sudden and involuntary motion, my eyes upon those of Olivia. A lovely blush overspread her face ;—she cast her eyes upon the ground, and taking little Brooke by the hand, she walked towards the gate. A silence ensued, and the little wag, observing Olivia in some confusion, said, “ Miss Livy, why do you blush ? you have not told a lie,”—“ My dear,” said I, “ do people blush when they tell lies ?”—“ Yes ; mamma says, she knows when I tell a lie by my blushing ; but I am sure Miss Livy has not told a lie.”

THIS observation increased, instead of alleviating, her embarrassment—I was going to change the subject—She opened the gate, and we walked in. Off scoured

the little scamperer, as fast as his legs could run, calling, "Mamma! papa! here is a gentleman along with Miss Livy."

THE parlour door was open, and we entered. Olivia said, "Mr Brooke, here is a gentleman, who is a perfect stranger in the neighbourhood, whom I beg leave to introduce to you."

MR. Brooke answered, "My dear Olivia, the gentleman is doubly welcome from such an introduction to my humble roof."

AFTER I was seated (for Olivia took her leave immediately), I related to Mr. and Mrs. Brooke the manner in which I met with their son gathering cowslips in a meadow, by the water-side. They chid him gently for wandering so far from home, and he promised to do so no more.

FROM a little conversation, I observed Mr. Brooke to be a man far above ceremony. There is an openness in his behaviour which is engaging; there is an ingenuousness in his manner which captivates and wins you. His communicativeness was agreeable, and I perceived his intelligence was extensive. By using a little artifice in proposing my interrogatories, I was soon convinced of his erudition. Whether or no he perceived my intention, I know not. He seemed not to do so, for he answered without the least hesitation, and with the utmost freedom, such questions as many would have deemed in a stranger presumptuous and impertinent. Having received a general invitation, I shall with all the pleasure imaginable cultivate a lasting friendship with this worthy man.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

AS soon as I had left the worthy Mr. Brooke, I retired to my chamber, with an intention to amuse and instruct myself, by a perusal of my favourite bard, the courtly HORACE. I attempted to read, but soon found the attempt was vain. My thoughts were employed upon another subject, and all my endeavours to collect and fix them upon some favourite ode were totally fruitless. Olivia, the charming Olivia, was ever present in my mind; I thought I saw her continually before my eyes; and whenever I attempted to recollect another object, in order to divert, if possible, a passion, which I now perceived but too visibly had imperceptibly taken root in my heart, I found all my thoughts recur, by an internal impulse, to their original cause,—the beautiful Olivia.

DISTRACTED, yet charmed with the idea of being captivated thus unawares, without thinking of the consequences, I threw poor HORACE from me, arose hastily from my seat, and in the utmost confusion, walked several times across the floor. A thousand chimerical procedures crowded into my imagination—an imagination heated and tormented with the most violent, yet the most pleasing passion of the human mind. One moment I determined to go and discover myself to Olivia, and make an immediate declaration of my flame; the next, I thought of doing it by let-
ter.

ter. These were instantly superseded by the idea of an application to the good Mr. Brooke, who probably might be persuaded to become my friend and intercessor. These, and many more resolutions, too tedious to enumerate, and which I was not in a capacity to examine, created such a distraction in my brain, that, almost frantic, I threw myself with violence into an arm chair which stood in a corner of my room, and remained for some time in a state of absolute stupefaction. Beginning to recover, I observed the objects in the room more distinctly—my perceptions were not so irregular—my scattered senses not in such disorder—I sighed heavily—an involuntary flood of tears gave my mind immediate ease, and I burst out into the following soliloquy: “O Wilton! thou art
“doomed to be unhappy! Born the heir of an ancient
“and honourable family; educated with care, and
“nurtured with parental tenderness; by one act of
“disobedience, thou hast plunged a happy family in-
“to distress, and thyself into misery and wretched-
“ness. What reparation canst thou make to thy fa-
“mily! what happiness canst thou promise to thy-
“self! Thou art here, alienated from thy family,
“separated from thy friends, and labouring under a
“paternal malediction, almost an outcast of society.
“Thou hast abruptly left thy family, to escape a
“forced marriage, and art here ensnared by the be-
“witching shackles of love! captivated with a
“stranger, whom probably thy family would scorn
“to own—Gracious Heaven! what consolation is
“there for a wretch like me, struggling under the
“terrors of a wilful disobedience, and the dreadful
“sentence of a father’s curse!” I ceased.—After a
considerable pause, “But this consolation,” said I,
“still remains: I acted from a thorough conviction
“of doing right; if I am wrong, it is an error not
“wilfully

“ wilfully committed ; and I hope that Power whose
 “ providence superintends the actions of all below,
 “ will forgive and pardon it.”

HAVING concluded, I continued in a reverie for some minutes, which being progressively dissipated by the returning powers of reason, I at length arose, left my room, and walked into the fields. A gentle shower of rain had just fallen to the ground—the lucid drops hung glittering from every pile of grass—the pretty wild flowers, which were scattered profusely around my feet, were again expanding their unnoticed beauties to the enlivening rays of the sun—the little woodland songsters were trilling forth their melodies from every spray, as thankful for the genial tribute which the earth had received. I often stopped—I listened with pleasure—the scene around me was cheerful, refreshing, and gay—the wildness of the music was attractive, and served to sooth my present melancholy. I could not help exclaiming, “ Happy warblers ! your enjoyments are real, your pleasures
 “ are tranquil and unalloyed ! This song of thankfulness for the care of Providence is a warning, a
 “ lesson to rational beings. Happy inhabitants of
 “ the fields, yet probably unconscious of your happiness ! how many of the sons of men, endowed
 “ with all the magnificence which grandeur can bestow, might envy your scenes of tranquillity and
 “ joy.”

WHILE I poured out these exclamations, I carelessly rested against the bole of a sycamore, and was just in the action of moving from it, when I was saluted with a note, that at once charmed, delighted, and riveted my feet to the spot. I looked round, and espied at a few yards distance, perched on the top of a lofty ash, my sweet musician. His coat was of a
 shining

flaming jetty black, his bill of the brightest yellow, his notes rapturous and enchanting. I was in a mood to listen---I listened with a pleasure which is beyond description. The woods which hung upon the shelving banks of the *Wansbeck* re-echoed to his song. On a sudden he dropped from his slender twig---I eyed him with eagerness, and marked his place of rest. I approached the place with soft and silent steps, fearful of disturbing the sweet songster, and the little partner of his cares :---she was nestling, with her wings outspread---they flew affrighted from the nest---I examined its structure with admiration. I observed the domestic pair sitting upon a hawthorn bough watching my proceedings : I retired, and left them unmolested, while I reflected upon the care, the anxiety, the affection of these inhabitants of the groves. " Let man," said I, " let the parents of the human race learn duty, learn affection for their offspring from these little warblers of the groves. See the unfeigned fondness of these poor birds for one another ! what expressions of kindness ! May your loves be crowned with success ! your progeny remain unpilfered ! may you long live an emblem of conjugal fidelity !"

WHEN I returned, dinner was upon the table ; and though I found my mind more tranquil, my appetite was gone ; a sure symptom of the mental œconomy being in some degree deranged. O Benfield ! do not laugh at me ; pity me, I beseech you, pity me, and send me some admonitory hints of consolation. I know you will say I deserve none, from the constant ridicule with which I derided your flame for my sister Antonet. But consider, I had not then entered upon my noviciate ; I was a stranger to the passion of Love ; and your sighs and complaints made no other impression than now and then exciting an immoderate

fit of laughter. But you know I was your steady friend; that I interested myself in your favour, even when threatened with the penalty of my father's displeasure. But what am I saying, or to whom am I writing? Indeed, Benfield, love will make fools of us all. This charming stranger, I acknowledge, has made one of me; and it is long ago since my sister made one of you. Bear with my weakness. I never before could perceive the propriety of applying the epithets Heavenly, Angelic, &c. to a mortal being; yet now I confess they may be with truth applied to my Olivia. Mine, did I say? What obstacles are to be surmounted before the accomplishment of such a wish! The events of futurity are concealed from our knowledge, and many a happy effect is produced by a concatenation of circumstances, which seemed in their original formation to threaten a different conclusion. May I not live and hope for such a favourable conjuncture!

I am ever Yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

FROM the contents of my last, you will readily conceive the anxiety of my mind. Wavering and indeterminate, I fixed upon a variety of methods to discover my passion to the lovely Olivia. But no sooner had I taken one resolution, than another started up, which seemed more specious and unexceptionable. One moment embracing what the next was discarded, I finally determined to consult with the worthy Mr. Brooke upon an affair of such importance, as was certainly to involve in its consequences my future happiness or misery. This point being settled, I walked

I walked to the Vicarage, where I found the good man busied in the study of the Peloponnesian war, in the original Greek of that acute Historian THUCYDIDES. The discussion of such a subject would, till very lately, have been to me a most delicious treat ; but in my present mood of thinking, the investigation of any classical topic was irksome and tedious.

MR. Brooke observing that I looked grave, immediately enquired, in the tone of genuine friendship, if I were well. The interrogation somewhat alarmed me ; and, though conscious of my errand, I found myself, from the violent agitation of my mind, altogether incapacitated to divulge a secret, the concealment of which was every moment adding to my torment, and depriving me of my wonted peace. My emotion was too visible. Mr. Brooke arose, and coming towards me, " My dear Sir," said he, " let me intreat you " to make no scruple of acquainting me with the " cause of your present anxiety, that my solicitude for " you may at least alleviate, if not restore you to that " peace of mind, to which at present you seem to be " a stranger."

" O MY generous friend !" exclaimed I, " I " thank you for your kindness ! May it not be lost " upon a wretch, who seems doomed by fate to " wretchedness and despair ! I have endeavoured to " steer my course through life in the paths of virtue, " but I fear my endeavour has been vain."

" I HOPE not," replied Mr. Brooke ; " the paths " of virtue and religion are seldom sought for in " vain. Though temporal happiness be not always " the certain meed of those who adhere to the dictates " of virtue and religion, yet they afford comfort " from the internal hope which they inspire, that

“ every suffering and affliction, however heavy or
 “ impending, will quickly have an end, when this
 “ weary pilgrimage is over, when this momentary scene
 “ of care and sorrow shall pass away like a shadow,
 “ or the fleeting vision of a dream. Dare you make
 “ me your confidant, Mr. Wilton? Trust to my
 “ honour, and you may rest assured, you will never
 “ receive any disservice from the confidence you re-
 “ pose in me.”

I REPLIED, “ Indeed, Mr. Brooke, I came with
 “ a full determination to unbosom myself to you, and
 “ though I have no cause for diffidence, I find myself
 “ begin to hesitate, when I am about to discover who
 “ I am, and the motive that prompts me to ask your
 “ assistance.” Without giving him time to reply, I
 added, “ I am the son and heir of the Earl of Wil-
 “ ton; and, like a prodigal and unthinking son, have
 “ by an act of disobedience forfeited my father’s love
 “ and esteem, overwhelmed an amiable family in the
 “ utmost distress, and am myself here an alien, and
 “ an outcast from society.” I then ingenuously told
 him every circumstance relative to my own case, with-
 out the omission of any one particular which might
 bias him in my favour, concluding with exacting a
 promise from him, not to divulge what I had en-
 trusted him with, until privileged by my authority so
 to do.

HAVING fixed his eyes earnestly upon my face
 during the time I was speaking, as if he wished to
 unravel my thoughts by the perusal of such an index,
 he said, “ I hope, Mr. Wilton, a favourable conjunc-
 “ ture will produce a reconciliation. You are not,
 “ as you seem to suppose, lost to all duty and obe-
 “ dience. Your father may not remain implacable;
 “ your mother will watch every opportunity to miti-
 “ gate

“gate his rigour, with all the tender solicitude so
 “conspicuous in the virtuous part of the sex. You
 “may have judged erroneously of the merits of the
 “lady. Sir George, by your description, is a wor-
 “thy, intelligent, and deserving man, and proba-
 “bly a little time may convince you that the vir-
 “tues of the daughter are meritorious and laudable.”

A DEEP involuntary sigh escaped me. He ob-
 served it, and, casting a smile of the sweetest be-
 nignity upon me, said, “If I am not mistaken,
 “your bosom is still labouring with a secret which
 “you have not yet revealed. I do not wish to urge
 “you to a discovery, yet you may rely upon me, and
 “command my services.”

“I have a secret,” I replied, “and upon that se-
 “cret alone depends my future happiness.—I love
 “OLIVIA! You perceive there are impediments
 “to our union which seem indeed to be invincible,
 “yet they must be surmounted. Will you, Mr.
 “Brooke, employ your kind offices with Sir Robert,
 “and acquaint him with my ardent passion for his
 “charming daughter?”

“HOLD, Sir!” said Mr. Brooke, “I find you are
 “under an egregious mistake in this instance. Oli-
 “via is not the daughter of Sir Robert Bertram.”

“NOT the daughter of Sir Robert!” exclaimed
 I; “fatal mistake indeed! who is she then?”

“SHE is,” said Mr. Brooke, “a distant relation
 “who has lived with him these several years, and
 “whom Sir Robert has adopted and educated as his
 “own child.”

ASTONISHED at this intelligence, I remained
 silent for some minutes, when taking my hat, and
 informing

informing Mr. Brooke that I would wait upon him in the evening, I immediately took my leave, and walked, as usual, into the park. It was solitary : I wished to be alone. I knew that I was here sequestered from every person, save the intrusion of the family to whom it belonged, and whose presence, so far from being pleasing to me in the present moment, would rather have been disagreeable. Ruminating on the intelligence I had received, I walked forward, with my eyes fixed upon the turf. The rural songsters sung their lays in vain—my favourite blackbird, at a few yards distance, whistled to his listening mate, —I heard—but heeded him not---the flowers beneath my feet expanded their various tinges unnoticed.

I ATTEMPTED to divert my thoughts from their present melancholy turn; and with this intention I sat down beneath the shade of a remarkably large plantain. Nothing interrupted the silence which reigned around me, except the wild warblings of the woodland songsters. Here I reclined, meditating upon my untoward fate, banished from my family and friends, no hope of returning, without a sacrifice which was now rendered more improbable than before---a stranger amongst strangers---tormented with a passion which I now despaired of gratifying; since the lovely object of it was no more the daughter, but the adopted child, of Sir Robert Bertram,---now condemning, now excusing the inconsiderateness of my conduct, which, by not informing myself of a circumstance so essential to the completion of my happiness, had led me carelessly to imbibe a subtle poison, whose operation, if it did not felicitate, would undoubtedly corrode my future peace.

IN the midst of this contemplation, I espied Sir Robert, his Lady, and Olivia, walking towards the place where I lay. I arose with a full intention to meet

meet them. I had not walked many yards, when I paused--a sudden chilly tremor shook my whole frame. I attempted to recover my resolution---I walked a few paces forward---I felt my heart beat with violence ; I even thought I heard it.---By an internal impulse of agitation and fear, I turned round, and walked from them. Observing the impropriety of such behaviour, I wished to turn again ; but shame and confusion were predominant, and I had no other alternative than to quicken my pace ; which I instantly put in execution, and walked home by a different path, reprehending and blaming with the utmost severity that dastardly conduct, which was afraid to meet the object of all my thoughts and of all my wishes..

Yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR. WILTON.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR last has indeed excited my pity. Considering the peculiarity of your situation, separated, and at such a distance, from all your friends, without a possibility of recurring to any of them for advice in so interesting an exigence, you demand my warmest commiseration. Experience has long since taught me, what you must now feel. Yet certainly you have this consolation--That your probationary state will not be of that duration which mine has been ; a state, I confess, of anxiety, solicitude, and sorrow, without the most distant hope of its termination to my satisfaction. Every day engenders new impediments to my union with one of the most lovely and faithful of the sex. I have tried every expedient which love, patience, and ho-

nour, could suggest, in order to satisfy the capricious obstinacy of a father, who is ultimately determined not only to delay, but even to frustrate, the happy completion of our wishes. My love is as fervent as ever, but my patience is nearly exhausted.

AN incident which lately happened has not only excited my chagrin, but almost prompted me to put in execution the only expedient which will finally make me happy in the uninterrupted possession of my dear Antonet. The expedient referred to, is what I have frequently apprized you of, and which has been postponed from time to time, merely from your advice. Reciprocal affection is a powerful stimulant to overstep the impeding bars of paternal authority. And why should two rational beings, happy in the mutual interchange of a pure affection, be rendered completely wretched, from a base compliance with a power, which neither nature nor religion declares to be insuperable? AN ELOPEMENT! may accomplish, what years of passive dalliance have only made more difficult. After such an explanation, I hope the execution will not be frustrated by any interposition which duty may suggest to you as necessary on such a crisis. The insinuation is unfriendly. Why should I doubt you? I have tried your fidelity, and have always found it unshaken and invariable.

You will perceive my style and method of reasoning to be somewhat altered in this letter. I have had sufficient cause, and with which I will now acquaint you.

A FEW days after I had been honoured with the company of your amiable mother and her two lovely daughters, I formed a resolution of paying a visit, after a long absence, to my dear Antonet, at Wilton-Park.

Park. Presuming on the good opinion of your mother, and from certain intelligence of Lord Wilton being in London, I did not hesitate, but set out with all the ardent impatience of a real lover. I arrived a little before dinner, and was received with all the genuine marks of undiffembled kindness. Lady Wilton was so condescending as to say, "Mr. Benfield, "I am once more happy in assuring you, beneath "my own roof, of my favour, in your honourable, "but I am afraid your fruitless, pursuits. Antonet "has repeatedly informed me, that she is affianced "to you by all the ties of honour and affection. "May the purity of your intentions, and the fidelity of your passion, be crowned with that success "which such a constant attachment deserves !"

"HAPPINESS," I replied, "has long been a "stranger to my breast. Years have now elapsed, and "time has brought nothing to maturity. My Lord "opposes our union with an obstinacy which reason "would reprehend."

HERE your mother looking attentively upon me, I recollected that I had overstepped the bounds of civility, in reflecting upon the conduct of your father in such a place, and before such company. I apologized for the unbecoming warmth of the expression, as the dictate of pure inconsideration. She said, "Whatever motive may prompt his Lordship "to oppose your marriage, I know not ; he has not "thought proper to reveal it to me," and a heavy sigh escaped from her lips. "I am seldom entrusted "with his confidential secrets ; and when he acts, "he acts from his own motives."

--I REPLIED, "It is a true, yet melancholy observation, that the happiness of young people is "frequently interrupted, if not finally destroyed, by "the

“ the authoritative interference of their parents, who
 “ wish to regulate their youthful inclinations by the
 “ maxims of prudential age. This temporising be-
 “ haviour has been productive of many and irrepara-
 “ ble evils. They are manifest, and acknowledged
 “ on all hands ; still they are persisted in, to the de-
 “ triment of happiness, the dissolution of the matrimo-
 “ nial bond, the contamination of morality, and the
 “ misery of human life. I have for these several
 “ years loved my Antonet—yes, I will call her
 “ mine—with an affection unshaken by insult, and a
 “ perseverance not intimidated by contempt. Our
 “ youth was alledged as the first impediment. Pa-
 “ tience surmounted it. A variety of excuses suc-
 “ ceeded, which served to procrastinate, to tantalize,
 “ and to defeat the consummation of a passion as
 “ pure as it is invariable. The retrospect is grating ;
 “ and instead of those years of chaste, connubial
 “ pleasures which we might have enjoyed, our days
 “ have been filled by increasing sorrow, solicitude,
 “ and care.”

I AROSE, and walking towards the charming part-
 ner of my unhappiness, I snatched her hand, and,
 eagerly kissing it, said, “ Have I, my Antonet, in
 “ the warmest effusions of my heart, ever uttered a
 “ syllable repugnant to the delicacy of your feelings,
 “ to the purity of your thoughts, to the chastity of
 “ your un sullied mind ? If I have, let me plead for
 “ an immediate forgiveness.”

SHE was sitting—her eyes were fixed upon the
 carpet—the crimson tint arose upon her cheek—her
 hand was close enlocked in mine—she said in words
 scarcely articulate, “ Mr. Benfield, you have long
 “ known my unceasing attachment—it requires no
 “ repetition,”

"repitition, much less confirmation. You have not offended me, therefore forgiveness is unnecessary."

DINNER was announced. This checked the fervour of my reply, but did not abate my present pleasure.

DINNER being ended, your mother and sister withdrew. This happy opportunity I wished to improve, by saying, "My dear Antonet, how long shall we be debarred from the completion of our happiness, by the compliance with a duty you are so loth to infringe! Years have passed away, and we have yet to hope. Cruel authority! But there is an alternative?"

"WHAT alternative?" she replied hastily.

"THAT of completing our happiness without the approbation of authority."

"OH Benfield!" exclaimed the lovely Antonet, "do not mention it. Consider the present unhappy state of our family, and I am confident you will not think of adding to its distress. Time may produce what all our precaution could not foresee."

"OH Antonet! Time is a tedious master! This was once our hope; he has deceived us; why should we a second time put any confidence in him? Let us rather seize him by the forelock, and improve from his rardiness. We have long submissively waited for paternal acquiescence, and cannot obtain it. Beside, by acting in conformity with your inclinations, what have you to brand yourself with?"

"MUCH,

“MUCH, very much do I fear,” she replied, “that were I to comply with your request, I should probably incur the lasting displeasure of an incensed father, as well as lose the protecting care of a mother, whose tenderness watched over my infancy, and whose anxiety is a shield to my riper years.”

“OH Antonet! in me, in me alone, expect to find not only the affection of a husband, but the constant care of a father, the tender anxiety of a mother to watch over your welfare, to lead you with safety through all the thorny mazes of this chequered life. Each day shall only add to my attention. Each night in my arms you shall sink to rest.”—[Here I enlocked the lovely creature in my embraces, and she hid her blushes in my bosom.]
 “—Let me conjure you, as you tender your own happiness and mine, to comply with my request.”

“DEAR Benfield,” she replied; “you have been long and thoroughly convinced of my unalterable affection. Believe me, when I assert that no solicitation, or length of time, shall ever prevail upon me to violate that sacred promise which I have voluntarily given you. At present, do not press me to comply with a proposal which would aggravate a distress that is already too heavy. I could—yes, I here avow it—I could willingly prefer a life of poverty with you, to a life of the most splendid affluence with any other. These fingers should toil for our subsistence, these feet should wander by thy side, and when thou wert weary, I would sit down by thee, and lull thee to rest with a song of sorrow.”

THIS tender, this gentle asseveration wholly overcame me, and suffused my cheeks with a liquid torrent.

rent. My tears dropped upon her bosom—she looked up—sympathetic feelings moved her breast, and she joined in my softening sorrow : a solemn and pathetic silence ensued. During this tender and affecting scene the door opened—and Lord Wilton entered. What was my astonishment ! His countenance was stern, sullen, and furious. He came forward. I unlocked my embraces, and was upon the point of framing some awkward apology for my presence, when my dear Antonet almost dropped upon the floor. She had swooned, when her father entered the room---my own confusion prevented me from perceiving it---I caught hold of her as she was falling, and supported her in my arms.

LORD Wilton sat down, casting a look of ineffable contempt and disdain upon his breathless daughter. In this dilemma I was quite disconcerted, and knew not what to do. I could not stir one foot from my Antonet, and I wanted immediate assistance. In a paroxysm of trepidation and despair I said, “ My Lord, will you be pleased to touch the bell ? Assistance is requisite.”

He made no reply, but continued to view us with the horrid frown which his inward rage had excited.

IN this dreadful situation I remained with my eyes fixed upon the face of Antonet, watching with anxiety the first signs of returning life. She heaved a deep sigh—opened her eyes, and shut them immediately, as if the very light were hateful to her.

LADY Wilton, accompanied by your sister Sophy, entered the room, and seeing us in the situation already described, shrieked out, “ Alas ! my daughter !”

THE

THE sound of her mother's voice aroused her deadened senses—she looked round, and, leaning on my Lady's arm, walked out of the room.

THE ladies were no sooner withdrawn, than Lord Wilton said, “Mr. Benfield, you have long been acquainted with my final determination on this business, and therefore to insult my house in my absence, is assuming unwarrantable liberties, and taking an advantage which a gentleman ought to blush at. Had not I been sufficiently explicit to you in your former application, this visit might have been dispensed with on the footing of civility, as you are very conscious that many of my visitors are situated at a greater distance.”

I WAS going to reply, but he prevented me by saying, “An apology is unnecessary---the insult was premeditated---my purpose is determined:”—and then walked out of the room, muttering some other sentences, which I could not hear distinctly.

PERCEIVING myself thus slighted and insulted, left alone by way of aggravation, denied even the privilege of replying to a vile accusation, you may conclude I was not only chagrined, but violently irritated. Necessitated to decamp, I walked out, ordered my horses, and left Wilton Park in a humour which will not easily admit of a description.

A FEW days after this adventure I received a letter, a copy of which I have inclosed for your perusal.

I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

BEING confined to my chamber by the express injunctions of my father, I have ventured, in opposition to his peremptory commands, to give you a succinct account of what passed after your abrupt departure from Wilton Park. This disobedience, I hope, is the more excusable, as the communication is perfectly innocent. My restraints you know are many, and sometimes scarcely tolerable. I have suffered them with resignation, being chiefly supported by the precepts and example of my amiable parent, who for many years, under patience and humility, hath borne with meekness the insulting tone of obstinacy, and the froward decisions of an ill-assumed superiority. The effect has not been answerable to her desert. She vainly hoped, that such gentle and endearing behaviour would in time soften and meliorate a disposition long known to be callous and obdurate to the finest touches of sensibility. She has hitherto failed; yet she still perseveres, from her high sense of duty, to acquiesce, in a measure which she silently disapproves, rather than to irritate a temper so impatient as my father's under the least opposition. This does not proceed from passiveness, timidity, want of resolution, or defect of understanding, but from the purest of all motives, a wish to preserve domestic peace and tranquillity. She seldom complains; and when she does, it is in a manner so gentle and so lenient, that it is difficult to decide, whether she applauds or reprehends. You know this little sketch is just and meritorious.

ABOUT

ABOUT an hour after you were gone, my mother and sister were sitting with me, when we received a summons to attend my father in the parlour. We instantly obeyed; and when we entered, immediately perceiving my father's brow to be overclouded, I took my chair with agitation, trembling for the bursting of the storm.

My father then said, "Lady Wilton, had you been unacquainted with my WILL relative to the addresses of Mr. Benfield, this admission of his visits in my absence might have been excusable; but as you cannot plead ignorance of my determination, and yet give a sanction to what I have absolutely prohibited, I must consider it as acting in direct contradiction to my pleasure, and an encouragement of an illicit amour, which may one day bring disgrace and ignominy upon your family."

"My Lord," replied my mother, "you accuse me as an accomplice, and of encouraging and conniving at the visits of a gentleman whose attachment to your daughter has been long and constant. This visit was as unexpected as it was unlooked for, and when he was announced, I could not either with civility or propriety forbid his entrance. I supposed he might have some welcome intelligence to communicate concerning my dear Henry."

"Hold, Madam," said my father, "I command you not to mention the name of that ungrateful boy in my presence. I have cast him from me—I have forgotten him. May his enjoyments in life be equal to his disobedience; and may every undutiful child meet with that penalty which will one day be his inheritance!

"ANTONET!"

“ANTONET!”

“MY LORD!”

“WAS it by your diligence that Mr. Benfield was apprised of my absence?”

I REPLIED, “It was not.”

HE said, “May I acquit you, Sophy, of the conveyance of this intelligence; or have you been tampered with by your sister to encourage a connection which you know I disapprove?”

SOPHY replied, “Indeed, my Lord, I have never yet disobeyed your will, nor was I in this instance solicited by my sister to convey any improper information?”

“WHAT do you call improper information, Sophy? Your answer is equivocal. Did you convey any at all?”

“NONE indeed, my Lord.”

THEN addressing himself to my mother, he said, “Though his visit, you say, was unexpected, your approbation was manifest, otherwise you would not have left them alone, to concert measures for a future intercourse, the accomplishment of which may terminate not only to your dissatisfaction, but to your sorrow and confusion. Pray, what was your motive for such a measure?”

“I DID not,” my mother replied, “conceive there was any impropriety in leaving Antonet in the company of Mr. Benfield for a few minutes. The
“prudence

“ prudence of her conduct has always been irrepre-
 “ hensible, and she hath more than once given a
 “ specimen of her obedience to your commands,
 “ though against the decisions of her own inclina-
 “ tion.”

My father said, with some vehemence, “ You are
 “ always endeavouring to exculpate what you can-
 “ not defend ; and pray, what extenuation have you
 “ for the late specimen of your son’s obedience ? It
 “ was, I suppose, in conformity to the decisions of
 “ his own inclination ?”

THIS contemptuous sneer was received by my mo-
 ther with that silent disdain which it so amply de-
 served.

THEN addressing himself to me, he said, “ Will
 “ you henceforth, Antonet, on pain of my displea-
 “ sure if you refuse, forswear all future correspon-
 “ dence with Mr. Benfield ?”

I WAS already somewhat irritated by the bitter sar-
 casm cast upon my amiable parent, and answered
 with some petulance, “ Your inhibition is too com-
 “ prehensive, my Lord. I have often, previous to
 “ this moment, asked with all filial humility, why I
 “ was prohibited with so much rigour from the en-
 “ joyment of a connexion which I deemed equally
 “ advantageous and honourable.”

“ WHAT,” rejoined my father, starting from his
 seat, with his countenance distorted by fury, “ do
 “ you begin to expostulate, and ask a reason for what
 “ I do ? Is not my will alone a sufficient law for my
 “ children ? And shall I tamely suffer the remon-
 “ strances of petulance, the interrogatories of dis-
 “ obedience,

“obedience, and the frowardness of arrogance? No, Miss Minx! no. And remember this, you saucy baggage”—advancing towards me, with his fist clenched in the attitude of striking, as he spoke these words—“remember this, if ever you a second time question my authority, I will turn you adrift, in search of your graceless brother, to wander through the labyrinths of life, exposed to all the miseries of poverty, and loaded with the imprecation of a justly incensed father.”

POOR Sophy, supposing, from his attitude and manner whilst he articulated his last words, that he was going to strike me, stepped hastily betwixt her father and me, exclaiming, “O my dear Sir, forgive my sister; she did not mean, I am sure, to offend you!”

“WHAT,” exclaimed he, more violent than ever, “a triple combination! O Nature, Nature! I tear thee from my heart! Out of my sight this instant, ye undutiful serpents, and remember you stir not from your separate apartments, until you have positive orders so to do.”

WE readily decamped, followed by our dear mother, pale, tottering, and seemingly half inanimate.

CAN such be *the duty* of a parent? Certainly not. Children ought to be treated as beings endowed with rational faculties, not as mere passive machines. I shall certainly one day break my fetters; they are become intolerable. But I have *a tie* that will not readily be broken—My dear mother often requires consolation—she entreats me not to desert her in her present calamity; and shall she entreat in vain? Heaven forbid! My duty to a parent, whose love
and

and tenderness I have ever experienced, shall be constantly employed in alleviating, or at least in the attempt to alleviate, the pain of those melancholy reflections which are inseparable from a state of unhappiness. O Benfield, condemn me not for such a determination. You know my heart. The course of a little time may accomplish all our wishes. But can I participate of happiness, or enjoy the least glimpse of peace, whilst my parent, a parent who never thwarted my inclinations without immediately convincing me that she acted for my good, may really want my attention to administer consolation in the moment of distress, may sigh for that hand which hath supported her in the hour of bitterness, and shed the tear of condolence over her deepest sorrows? Can happiness ever be my portion under such reflections as these? Remember, Benfield, you have a father.

Just as I had finished the last sentence, Sophy came giggling into my apartment, telling me she was sure that she never should be in love as long as she lived. I asked why. She said, she saw nothing but disappointment attendant upon it. "My brother was
"punished because he would not be in love; you
"are punished for being in love; therefore I will
"live and die an old maid to punish my father,
"and leave the inheritance and the old Mansion-house
"to some collateral branch of the family." I laughed at the resolution, and desired she would keep it.

LETTER.

LETTER XVIII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

ACCORDING to my promise, I waited upon Mr. Brooke in the evening. I found him as usual in his study. He laid down his book on my entrance; and which I without any ceremony took up. It was *QUINTUS CURTIUS*. "The events recorded in that Historian (said he) have always upon perusal struck me with admiration. The ambition of a young Grecian Prince to undertake such an expedition as the destruction of the Persian Empire, and the conquest of all Asia, borders so much upon the *incredible*, that if we had not authentic attestations of the fact, we might possibly have concluded the whole narration to be nothing more than hyperbolical exaggerations and improbable chimeras."

I ANSWERED, "His victories were not so wonderful, when we duly consider the troops by which he was opposed. The voluptuousness and effeminacy of the Asiatics were no match for the courage and discipline of the Greeks. But the conqueror, in my opinion, never appeared so great, as when in the tent of Darius administering consolation to his illustrious captives, the mother and wife of the Persian Monarch. This was really worthy of admiration in the youthful Alexander! But how long after this have we any just cause to admire him? His mad behaviour and frantic ambition, in supposing himself to be immortal, were not only derogatory to human nature, but a woe-
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“ful proof of the fatal perversion of our rational
 “faculties. His final exit was perfectly consonant
 “to his conduct through life—one perpetual scene
 “of madness; and so little respect was paid to his
 “memory by the companions of his victories, that
 “he was no sooner expired, than every relation and
 “descendant of his family was inhumanly butchered
 “by them, in the posthumous partition of his domi-
 “nions.”

“It is no more than a just reward,” replied Mr.
 Brooke, “deservedly entailed upon the posterity of
 “that hero who can deliberately perpetrate the
 “most horrid cruelties and unnatural massacres of the
 “human race, upon the childish yet puerile pretence
 “of adding one withering wreath to his glory. How
 “many peaceable and worthy Princes have passed
 “over this worldly stage, whose names are forgotten,
 “and whose actions are unrecorded! They lived
 “in quiet, devising plans of public utility, reigning
 “for the good of all, and dying with this acknow-
 “ledgement from every judicious man,—that they
 “lived the public benefactors of the human race.
 “But this still and sober passage through life never
 “makes that impression upon the minds of THE
 “MANY, which is produced by the din of battle,
 “and the blood of conquest. Vain and inconfide-
 “rate man! thou art always more delighted with
 “the blaze which would scorch thee when ap-
 “proached, than with the gentle heat which would
 “warm and nourish thee! How few, how very
 “few!” exclaimed he, “of all the heroes and con-
 “querors who have appeared upon the stage of life,
 “deserve the honourable appellation of the FRIENDS
 “of MANKIND! What slaughtered millions in
 “every age have demanded vengeance of the Sons
 “of Ambition! Grating reflection! to think that
 “man,

“ man, the image of his Maker, should coolly submit to the horrid task of being the murderer of his fellow-creatures ! And for what reward ? Merely to say, that he lives in the world with one man less than he originally found in it ; the sanguine murderer of innocence, and the baleful scourge of the human race ! ”

MR. Brooke ceased. I made no reply, by which he perceived that I wished to change the subject.

AFTER a short pause I said, “ The discussion of any classical topic has ever given me inexpressible satisfaction ; but when an affair of greater urgency, and of more importance, presses for immediate hearing, even the exploits of the Macedonian madman must be content with the second place.”

MR. Brooke smiled, and looked upon me with all the softness of true paternal regard.

I CONTINUED : “ Your communication this morning, Sir, relative to Olivia, has thrown me into the utmost embarrassment ; and being a stranger, I am perfectly at a loss to whom I can apply, except to yourself, for explanation upon a subject which so nearly and so tenderly concerns me.”

HE answered, “ As your present embarrassment arises from some expressions which dropped from me this morning, I am willing to give you all the intelligence I can, solely with a view to alleviate that concern which is visible in your present demeanour.”

“ WHEN I first came to the vicarage of Bertram, Olivia was here, under the care of Sir Robert. She seemed to be then about eleven or twelve years of age.”

“ age. I have resided here these ten years. From
“ the tender care and affectionate behaviour of Sir
“ Robert and Lady Bertram to the child, I had not
“ the least suspicion but she was their own daughter ;
“ and some years had elapsed before I was convinced
“ of my error. As I had my information by chance,
“ and Sir Robert and his Lady always kept a pro-
“ found silence on the subject, I thought it would be
“ impertinent in me to urge any particular enquiry.

“ I RECOLLECT some part of a conversation
“ which Sir Robert commenced of his own accord,
“ wherein he informed me, that Olivia was his
“ niece, that her mother was dead, and that her fa-
“ ther was in India. But when I interrogated him
“ more minutely, he evaded my questions, and by
“ an attempt at concealment, threw a doubtful my-
“ stery over the whole of his recital, which left it
“ more ambiguous than it was at first.

“ THE common opinion is (from whence it origi-
“ nated I know not), that Olivia is a natural daugh-
“ ter of Sir Robert, and that, having no legiti-
“ mate offspring, he purposes to invest her, at his
“ demise, with the sole possession of his whole inhe-
“ ritance. As for myself, I have no private opi-
“ nion upon the subject ; for what they desire to con-
“ ceal, I have no wish to develope.

“ THUS, Mr. Wilton, have I given you all the in-
“ telligence I am able, of an affair, concerning
“ which every one who speaks of it draws his own
“ conclusion. This only I am certain of, and my
“ certainty I have drawn from experience, that she is
“ a young lady amiable in the extreme for the sweet-
“ ness of her manners, the gentleness of her conde-
“ scension, and the improvement of an enlightened
“ understanding.”

I LISTENED

I LISTENED with great attention while Mr. Brooke was speaking, and when he concluded, I found myself embarrassed what to reply. He observed my confusion, and kindly relieved me by saying, "I perceive, Sir, your disappointment. You expected information, where I can only give opinion. I have not prevaricated, but have been as explicit on the subject as my knowledge would permit. To pry further, would only be the indulgence of a curiosity, idle if not reprehensible."

To this I replied, "I confess, Mr. Brooke, I am greatly disappointed. Finding myself much interested in the intelligence, I really expected more satisfactory information. I have not the least doubt of your candour and ingenuousness; you have no opinion of your own, and by Sir Robert's artfully evading your interrogatories, I am fully convinced that he wished to mislead you. Common Fame is frequently a common liar, and consequently no confidence can be placed in her report. However, I beg of you to take no notice of my enquiries, until you know the result of my future determination."

He assured me that I might confide in his silence; and was proceeding, when a little boy, somewhat taller than my pretty companion whom I had found gathering of cowslips, came into the room and said, "O dear papa, come and see this poor woman; she is wet and trembling; she has one baby at her breast, and another at her back—they are both crying—O papa, how they are crying! and their mammy says, they are crying for hunger.—mammy is out; dear papa, come and give the babies a bit of bread."

"WHERE, child," said Mr. Brooke, "where is the woman?"

"WELL, papa, my brother and I were playing, and she was walking along the road—the babies were crying. I asked her what they were crying for? She said ~~they were crying~~ for a bit of bread, for they had eat none to-day. Then indeed, papa, I took the woman by the hand, and brought her home, and now she is sitting by the kitchen-fire. She said, papa, that God would bless me for being so good to the poor."

Mr. Brooke walked out, and I followed him to see this woman, who had struck the child's fancy so forcibly as an object of charity. We found her answer to the description. Mr. Brooke ordered her and her children some refreshment, and I contributed my mite to the relief of her distress.

As we left the kitchen, I took the little christian by the hand, and would have led him into the parlour, being much delighted with his sensibility, as he did not seem to be above six years of age. He said, "Indeed, Sir, I cannot go just now; I must see the babies eat their breakfast, and then I will come."

I WAS really delighted to see the officiousness of the kind little creature, who would not suffer the servant to wait upon his guests, but served them with every thing himself very attentively.

WHEN we were withdrawn, Mr. Brooke said, "There is seldom a day in which he does not bring one or more poor objects to be served; and when his mamma chides him for it, his answer is, 'Well, mamma, if you won't serve them, I'll keep half

“ half of my dinner to give to them, for it must be
 “ a sad thing to be hungry.”

THIS little incident gave me much satisfaction. The sensibility of a child to the distress of a poor fellow-creature, is a severe censure on the conduct of many in their riper years. With what harshness, with what abuse, have I seen the complaints of cheerless poverty treated by the sons and daughters of affluence! Oh! would they but think, that the only distinction between the tattered half-starved suppliant and themselves is the mere external trapping with which they are decorated! The finery of their dress adds nothing to their merit; it often enhances pride, the vain ebullition of a little mind. I have known more real worth beneath the rags of a wandering wretch who begs a scanty pittance from door to door, than is sometimes to be met with beneath the gaudy glitter of a star and garter. Vain pageants, and too often ill-applied! Let the wearers of them learn from little Brooke, the relative duties which they owe to their poor brethren! Let them learn to applaud the feelings of infancy, and they will soon blush for their own.

THE contents of your's and my sister's letter convince me that you are not in a much more eligible situation than myself. I think, Benfield, you will not readily pay another visit to Wilton-Park; and if I am not mistaken, the fullness of my father will make my sister take shelter in your arms. Whenever it happens, I shall feel myself happy in the affinity. But my mother! the sufferings of my mother grate me indeed! Could I but alleviate them, and add one moment of happiness to her existence, I should deem myself the most happy of sons.

I am, &c.

F 4

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

AFTER coolly deliberating upon the subject of my passion, perplexed by uncertainty, and considering my present case as somewhat critical, I finally determined to observe how some little attentions, rather more than mere civilities, would be received by Olivia, before I made any application to Sir Robert for his approbation of my suit to the lady. The only difficulty which I foresaw to my resolution was, obtaining the happiness of a fit opportunity to make those advances which I deemed expedient, and according to the reception of which I proposed to regulate my future proceedings.

THIS being duly settled with myself, I walked forth, ardently wishing for a favourable juncture, but which I knew not when or how to expect. The morning was chill and damp, the wind blew cold from the North-east, and the air was foggy:—no wild notes from the hedges gave me a cheerful welcome—a lone and solitary chirp, now and then, from the chaffinch was the only music I heard—the park-wall was high, and I took the benefit of its shelter on the west side, to screen myself from the chillness of the blast.

I WALKED and meditated, forming a variety of resolutions, which were rejected in the very embryo, with my cane under my arm, my hands behind my back, my eyes fixed upon the ground, and altogether inattentive to every object around me, when I heard myself addressed with, “Good morning, Sir, “and God bless you!”

I LOOKED

I LOOKED up, and immediately espied the poor woman whom little Brooke had, the day before, brought to the Vicarage, as a proper object of charity. She was sitting beneath the covert of some brambles; the younger child was sucking at her breast, the other was upon her knee, partly covered with the tatters of an old blue cloak:—she trembled, her teeth chattered in her head, and every now and then she tenderly pressed the poor little partners of her misery to her heaving bosom. I saw the tear steal gently down her cheek—she turned away her head in order to conceal it.

I WAS moved; I wished to know the cause of her sitting there; and yet was afraid to ask her, lest the answer might revive some latent and afflicting sensations. She again addressed me with, “God Almighty
“bless you, Sir!”

I SAID, “Pray, good woman, what motive
“prompts you to pray so earnestly for me?”

SHE answered, “The purest motive, the feelings
“of a grateful heart. Your benevolence of yesterday
“enabled me to procure a bed for myself and my
“dear little ones to sleep on last night—the first we
“have slept on for these three months past.”

A FLOOD of tears choked her utterance; she sobbed, and wept bitterly; again she pressed her infants to her bosom, and tenderly kissed them both. I felt the tear rising, and walked a few paces from her.

WHEN I returned I said, “You do not seem to
“be familiar with the wretchedness to which you are
“at present reduced. If the recollection of better
F 5 “days,

“ days, and the recital of misfortunes, be not too
“ pungent and afflictive, let me beg of you to in-
“ dulse me with the narration of them.”

SHE replied, “ I thank you, Sir, for your great con-
“ descension. The recital of misfortunes and the com-
“ munication of sorrow frequently alleviate the bur-
“ den of woe. I have sometimes attempted to tell
“ my unhappy case to persons, of whom I have so-
“ licited a piece of bread to satisfy the hunger of
“ myself and little ones, who have scornfully turned
“ from me with the bitter taunt of telling me,
“ Your children will serve you to-day, they will
“ serve another to-morrow;” affliction to me more
“ bitter than their uncharitableness, and to which I
“ never deigned to reply. The very supposition that
“ my dear babes were not my own, but borrowed
“ with an intention of imposing upon the benevolent,
“ always overwhelmed me with the deepest grief.

“ My father was a gentleman of small fortune in
“ the Western parts of this county. I was an only
“ child. My education was suitable to my expect-
“ tations ; and I was brought up with all the ten-
“ derness and care which the sollicitude of an af-
“ fectionate mother could possibly confer upon me.
“ When I was eighteen years of age, I went for
“ amusement to *Gilfland Wells*, a watering-place of
“ some resort in the North for invalids and valetudi-
“ narians, but, like all others, more so for the idle
“ and the curious. Here I met with Mr. Moreton,
“ a young gentleman of some figure, whose atten-
“ tions and assiduities soon gained the esteem and
“ love of a heart like mine, innocent and inexpe-
“ rienced. He accompanied me in my return to my
“ father’s house, and humbly asked permission to re-
“ new his visits. Being a stranger, my father hesi-
“ tated,

“tated, and told him, he hoped he would not object
 “to an enquiry relative to his family, his connections,
 “and views in life, before he could give his
 “acquiescence to a proposal which in the result might
 “involve the honour of his child.

“MR. Moreton readily assented. The enquiry
 “was unfavourable to him. Though he had started
 “upon the world with a personal fortune of five
 “thousand pounds, and a real estate of near one
 “thousand a year, without any incumbrance upon it,
 “yet his extravagance and dissipation had much curtailed
 “it; and it was supposed that his circumstances were much
 “deranged. The issue of this intelligence was, his visits were prohibited, and I
 “was forbid to hold any further correspondence with
 “him. But the impression already made was not so
 “easily effaced. Prosperity and adversity were of
 “no consideration with me; and I vainly thought,
 “were I but blessed with the man of my choice, happiness
 “would be my constant companion! Fatal error! By bribing
 “one of our servants, we carried on a correspondence, totally
 “unsuspected by my parents, for near two months; the consequence
 “of which was, an elopement to Scotland, where we were
 “married. But the golden dream of happiness soon vanished,
 “and I had early proofs of indifference and inattention,
 “which wrung my heart with sorrow.

“WITHIN six months after our marriage, my
 “mother, naturally weak and delicate, died, from the shock
 “which was occasioned by my disobedience and ingratitude.
 “My father, incensed beyond measure, sold his estate,
 “and left the kingdom.

“ MR. Moreton, disappointed in his views in regard to fortune, treated me openly with negligence and contempt. His extravagance increased, and his dissipation knew no bounds. Soon after the birth of this dear little boy, I began to perceive, from the clamours of his creditors, that his affairs were so involved as to be past redemption. I saw, when it was too late, the folly of my conduct. I often, in the mildest terms, remonstrated with him on the impropriety of his pursuits. His only answer was, he was not dissipating my fortune. This cruel observation always silenced me. When I was eight months gone with child of this sweet babe which is now sucking at my breast, he went out one morning. I saw him mount his horse — he disappeared — but never more returned.

“ THE creditors now seized upon the little property that was left ; and every thing was sold, except my apparel, which pressing necessity has compelled me to dispose of, by little and little, to support the craving calls of nature, and supply the wants of my poor helpless offspring. Reduced to the wretched plight in which you now behold me, I took my children in my arms, and left that neighbourhood where my youth had known better days. A consciousness of my former expectations, contrasted with the shame and poverty of my present miserable condition, incited me to fly from those acquaintances whose feigned pity added stings to my misery.

“ THUS I wander from house to house, from village to village, whilst my strength permits me ; and when I am weary and faint with hunger, I sit down beneath the friendly shelter of some hawthorn

“ thorn hedge, and weep over my little ones, who,
“ lifting up their eyes, innocently ask the cause of my
“ sorrow.

“ PROVIDENCE, all kind and beneficent, has hitherto supported me from sinking beneath my misfortunes, and preserved my health, that I may be able to preserve the lives of my sweet innocents. The many nights which I have slept upon a cold truss of straw, the many which I have passed upon the damp surface of the earth, with the bleak winds beating upon my body, must ere this have terminated my existence, had not that God who superintends all his works, supported me with the hope that my misfortunes would be of no long duration. Though I repine, I am yet resigned.”

SHE ceased—she wept bitterly—then fixing her eyes upon her children, with a look of pity mixed with the wildest sorrow, she clasped them eagerly to her panting bosom, and tenderly kissed them both, saying, “ Heaven provide for and bless my sweet little innocents !”

I FELT for her wretchedness, and wished to relieve it. I presented her with a guinea, desiring she would go to the same lodging where she had been last night, and likewise that she would meet me here at the same hour to-morrow morning. In the meantime, I promised that I would endeavour to concert some measures by which her miseries might be alleviated, and an end put to her present wandering condition. She took the guinea with a smile of joy—placed it in her hand—and now looked at it—then looked at me, with a glance of wonder mingled with surprise.

AFTER

AFTER a silence of some seconds, she said, "This charitable donation will confer happiness and plenty, blessings to which I have long been a stranger. Accept the thanks of a grateful heart, and as soon as my little-ones can list your name, I will teach them to bless that hand which hath so liberally contributed to the relief of their misery."

HERE the eldest child threw from it the tatters of the cloak which covered it, and looked round about it. "There," said she, "George, look at that gentleman; he is our preserver, and more to thee than a father."

THE little innocent, as if conscious of what she said, smiled cheerfully upon me. He was dressed in a frock that had once been white. His countenance was pleasing, and he stretched forth his little arms to come to me, when his mother said, "No, my dear, the gentleman cannot take you." He dropped his lip—the smile fled from his countenance, and he began to wimper.

I FELT an impulse of tenderness for the little stranger, and took him in my arms; and whilst I was playing with him, I observed Olivia, and a gentleman along with her, coming towards us. Not ashamed of my office, I moved on to meet them, with little George in my arms, who seemed much delighted with his new acquaintance. I had no sooner joined Olivia, than my new companion stretched out his arms to go to her; she took him, kissed him, and said, "George, where is your mamma?" He instantly pointed with his finger to the place where she was sitting. We walked forward—I perceived by the observant glances of the gentleman, that he could dispense with my presence.

WHEN

WHEN we approached Mrs. Moreton, she immediately informed Olivia what I done, who asked me, if she had informed me of her misfortunes? I answered, that she had. She assured me of their reality, and taking some silver out of her pocket, she addressed the gentleman thus: "Now, Mr. Longford, let me add your five shillings to these, to give to this worthy woman, to buy bread for her children."

"WHAT," answered he with much precipitation, "give her five shillings! Why, my five shillings and your five shillings make ten shillings; and she says this gentleman has given her a guinea, which would make one pound eleven shillings—a fine morning's work for a beggar, truly! No, no, the poor-rate is too heavy already. My estate pays above fifty pounds a year to support the poor. I have written several times to Sir William Miles, our representative, persuading him to have the poor-tax repealed, which if he do not, he shall never more have a vote from me, nor any of my tenants, and I have fifteen of them."

"BUT, Mr. Longford," returned Olivia, "don't you remember that precept in the scripture which says, He that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord?"

"TRUE, true," replied he, "I recollect it now; and you know I can refuse you nothing: but depend upon it, if Sir William do not repeal the poor-tax, I will keep my word with him. There is the money, I cannot refuse you—but I must say, it is a good morning's work."

THE poor woman received the present with a thousand thanks, took her children in her arms, and walked from us.

THE abruptness of Mr. Longford's harangue, a strangeness in his manner, his correctness in calculation, and Olivia's freedom with him, all conspired to make me eye him attentively. My curiosity was raised, but his officiousness entirely deprived me of an opportunity of immediate enquiry. He talked incessantly, sometimes of the poor-tax, sometimes of marriage; then he would drop the subject, and snatch hold of her hand, to lead her safely past a stone or a mole-hill. I observed he received no check for his assiduities. Sometimes he discoursed very consistently; at others, I thought I perceived a wildness in his expressions, for which I was at a loss to account, except from some intellectual derangement.

WE came to a gate; I stepped forward to open it: he told me that was his business, as the lady was this day under his particular charge. I looked at Olivia, as requiring an explanation:—she looked grave, but made no reply. I was much embarrassed, and could form no conclusive resolution how I should behave towards my very officious rival.

WITH a view to arrest her attention, I said, "Pray, Madam, how long has this poor woman been an object of your benevolence?"

SHE replied, "About six months, Mr. Wilton. Your generosity was well-timed."

I CAUGHT her eye fixed upon mine—I returned, with some ardour, and I believe a sigh escaped me,
"Does

"Does this trifling incident merit your praise,
"Olivia?"

SHE hesitated, as under some emotion, before she spoke; and then answered, "What can be more
"meritorious than to relieve the indigent, to alleviate the pressing load of penury, to cheer the
"drooping heart, and dispel the boding fears of
"craving hunger and depressive want."

WHILST she was speaking, her face was turned from Mr. Longford towards me. I caught the words as they fell from her lips; I was agitated, and eagerly caught her hand. I pressed it; she gently drew it from me. I observed her looks—her countenance at the instant was placid, serene, and composed—nothing forbidding, nothing repulsive.

DURING this little interval Mr. Longford was frequently attempting to gain her attention, but she seemed to hear him not. At last he exclaimed,
"Yonder come Sir Robert and Lady Bertram!"

THIS exclamation disturbed my reverie, and I observed them at no great distance. This was the first time, Benfield, I ever wished for their absence. I found I had no relish for their company, no, nor for any other except that of Olivia. I was absorbed in these thoughts when they approached.

LADY Bertram said, "The day is damp and chill;
"there is no pleasure in walking. Shall we have the
"favour of your company to dinner, Mr. Wilton?"
I pleaded an excuse, and took my leave.

LETTER XX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

MY reason for declining the invitation of Lady Bertram was, that I might have immediate leisure for the prosecution of my passion with the dearest object of my soul. The incident of the day had added fuel to a flame already too predominant. I was vain enough to think that she did not view me with an eye of indifference. I recollected and weighed every trivial instance of our late interview; how she evaded the officiousness of Mr. Longford; her attention to me when I addressed myself to her; and how gently she drew her hand from me without a frown. When all these weighty reasons were combined, they sufficiently convinced me of my future success.

AGAIN I expostulated with myself, What is there in all this beyond mere civility and common complaisance? This interrogation suddenly chilled the ardour of my expectation.

I THEN began to deliberate upon the effects of such an attachment. My father's imprecation resounded in my ears, and corroded the little happiness I enjoyed. Mrs. Moreton was a lively evidence of the dreadful effects of disobedience to parents.

AGAIN Olivia, the charming Olivia, appeared in my mind—she stood before my eyes with all the exquisite grace and becoming loveliness peculiar to herself.

IN

IN an instant, all deliberation, my father's displeasure, and Mrs. Moreton's disobedience, vanished from my thoughts, and Love, triumphant Love, reigned without a rival. I resolved to apprise her of my passion, and immediately wrote the following letter :

“ TO MISS OLIVIA BERTRAM.

“ MADAM,

“ AN address of this nature from a person who is almost a perfect stranger, and has only resided in the neighbourhood for a few weeks, may not a little surprise you.

“ THE short intimacy, the few observations I have been enabled to make, have convinced me of your perfections—perfections, which have subdued and captivated me.

“ THE sensibility of your nature, the benevolence of your sympathising heart, will teach you not to treat with disdain a young man who is already but too well acquainted with the pangs of misery and the agonies of wretchedness. That transcendent worth, that becoming loveliness, so conspicuous in all your conduct and demeanour, which I adore and admire, will never, I hope, be exercised to torment, by a cool neglect or fastidious contempt, him who is unhappily destined, by a wayward fortune, to drink from the bitter cup of early misfortune.

“ THERE is a peculiarity in my present case which requires a verbal explanation. This, I shall embrace

“ brace the first opportunity to develope ; and attempt to unfold, to your entire satisfaction, any
 “ mysterious veil or unfavourable impression which
 “ may have arisen from my appearance in the North.

“ BELIEVE me, my dearest Olivia, when I assert
 “ I am actually unhappy. Unhappiness drove me
 “ from my home, from my parents, from my friends,
 “ from every thing I wished for in life ; and without you condescend, in your wonted complaisance,
 “ to soothe a flame which is as pure as ever agitated
 “ the breast of a mortal creature, my retreat will
 “ only add a shade to my distress, that was before but
 “ too sombrous and melancholy.

“ LET not precipitancy think it a deception, when
 “ I assure you that my family is noble, and I the unhappy heir to the title. What some will deem as youthful folly, and others censure as flagrant disobedience, is the principal cause why I have had the
 “ real happiness or the real woe of being honoured
 “ with your acquaintance. O let your decision, in
 “ this important conjuncture, be as favourable, be
 “ as benignant, as the inherent goodness of your
 “ heart can dictate ! Commiserate, my Olivia, commiserate if you cannot encourage, a passion which
 “ is inspired by a merit so generally acknowledged,
 “ and probably unequalled.

“ THOUGH I love with an ardour not easily described, I do not wish to draw you into any illicit
 “ practices, or solicit a correspondence without the
 “ previous consent of your honourable parents Sir
 “ Robert and Lady Bertram.

“ IN all the corroding illusions of doubt and suspense, of diffidence and despair, I shall await the
 “ issue

“ issue from your benignity, which stamps my fate
 “ irretrievably for extatic happiness or confirmed
 “ misery.

“ I am, with the sincerest love,

“ Your humble servant,

“ H. WILTON.”

WHEN I had finished this epistle, and perused it over and over until I was weary of blotting, altering, and interlining, I perceived, instead of adding to the original sketch, I only obscured and made it more unintelligible. I thought it was not written with all the fire or with all the ardour which a young lady might expect from a captive to her charms ; yet when I reflected upon Olivia's apparent candour, the particular turn of her mind, discoverable from her common conversation and occasional incidents, I concluded that a rational discovery of my passion would be more congenial to her disposition, than all the frivolous effusions, the trifling ebullitions of rapture and extacy.

HAVING finally come to this determination, an insuperable obstacle presented itself to my imagination. This was the safe and secret delivery of my letter to the hands of Olivia. To entrust it with any individual whom I was altogether unacquainted with, might not only lead to a discovery, but likewise to procrastination. A discovery so obtained might induce Sir Robert to think very unfavourably of me, for attempting to pervert Olivia from her duty. Procrastination, in my present case, could only add to my anxiety, and which, I wished, if possible, to avoid.

IN this perplexity, I resolved to walk to Bertram Castle this evening, and watch for a lucky opportunity

nity when I might deliver it with safety and secrecy to herself; and if any miscarriage should intervene, it was solely to be imputed to my own mismanagement.

WHEN I arrived at Bertram Castle, I was welcomed, as usual, by the cheerful congratulations of Sir Robert and Lady Bertram.

MR. Longford and Mr. Fennell were there. I addressed the latter gentleman, who returned my compliment so very formally and coolly, that it attracted the observation of the lively lady of the mansion, who, with a vivacity peculiar to herself, said, "I think, Mr. Fennell, you seem to have no great desire to cultivate an acquaintance with our neighbour Mr. Wilton. He is a stranger, Sir, and as such ought not to be received with the ceremonious respect of a jealous eye."

THE last words of this sentence were expressed with a peculiar archness of manner, which often conveys a sting, when nothing more than a little harmless humour is originally designed.

MR. Fennell coloured—Olivia looked rather distressed—whilst Mr. Longford said, "I am jealous of no man, for I am certain of getting the poor-tax repealed, and of marrying Olivia; and then you know, Sir Robert, Mr. Fennell may eat all his hares himself; for when Olivia is my wife, I will not allow her to pick one single bone of them."

SIR Robert smiled, and Lady Bertram seemed to enjoy the distress of Olivia, and the apparent confusion of Fennell, who replied, with a sarcastic tone, "To treat any gentleman with the ceremonious re-
spect

“spect of a jealous eye who is a perfect stranger,
 “whose family and connections are totally unknown,
 “and whose appearance among us is somewhat equi-
 “vocal, would by the judicious be deemed pru-
 “dence.”

HERE, throwing one leg over the other, he looked round with an air of consequence, while I retorted, “A stranger demands civility, and, if a gentleman, politeness, from every individual capable of the accomplishment. Civility is an easy carriage, but not so easily dispensed with in the common intercourse of life. If the beggar who requests a morsel of bread to allay the cravings of his appetite, ask it with civility, he ought to be gratified or denied in the same style, otherwise he enjoys a visible superiority over the person to whom his civil requisition is made. And though I am a stranger, and my appearance in the North somewhat equivocal, I dare venture to assert that my family and connexions, though at present unknown, would not bring dishonour, by any alliance, on any house in the county. As an individual, I have endeavoured to deport myself with so much caution, as to avoid giving umbrage to any one; and by so doing, I conceived my behaviour even exacted a return of common civility. I have in this instance, as often before, been disappointed.”

HERE Sir Robert wished to make some observation, but was interrupted by a call to supper.

THE conversation changed, and took a general turn. Sir Robert was cheerful; Lady Bertram, by her hilarity, endeavoured to spread good-humour amongst her guests; Olivia was serious, solemn, and composed; but Mr. Fennell was downright sullen,
 nd

and Mr. Longford chattered incessantly, while no person but myself seemed to pay him the least attention.

I WAS anxious for an opportunity to execute my intended scheme; and was agitated between the exultation of hope and depression of fear. The table was drawn—I held my letter folded and crumpled in my left hand, so as to be imperceptible to any eye. Attentive to every motion of Olivia, I hoped to deceive even the observation of eagle-eyed jealousy.

OLIVIA moved—her handkerchief dropped—I was alert, took it up with my left hand, and dexterously conveying my billet-doux into it, politely presented it to her: she curtsied, thanked me, and took it.

MY present trepidation made me very uneasy. I alone was conscious of an action which strict rectitude might condemn. An unlucky accident might produce a discovery, when shame and confusion would be the inevitable consequence. The ladies withdrew—I was somewhat easier;—but being fearful, I took my leave.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SIR,

THIS morning, with my mind perturbed, and fearful lest any unlucky accident might have happened, I went to wait upon Mr. Brooke ; one moment being determined to acquaint him with my proceeding of yesterday ; the next retracting the determination, and resolving to keep the secret to myself, and patiently await the issue. From a consciousness of the impropriety of the transaction, I often wished myself in the same situation I had been in yesterday morning at the same time. I dreaded the event. I reviewed the whole occurrence—I condemned myself for precipitation—and I wished to be able to undo an action which I had performed last night in an instant of time, with all the precaution and wariness which love and prudence could dictate.

SUCH is the inconsistency, such the instability of man in his chequered progress through the mazy labyrinths of life ! Ever ardently endeavouring to attain the fancied Happiness, which skims before his sight like a visionary phantom, enticing, yet eluding his most eager pursuit, he at length acknowledges the deception ; while every year, nay every day, presents a standing memorial of a vigorous renewal of this fantastic chimera. Even the accomplishment of his wishes yields no real satisfaction to his active mind. He revolves, he plans, he perseveres in the execution of a premeditated scheme :—he perceives the illusion ; regrets his folly for an

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hour ; yet resolves to pursue the same round with as much avidity and ardour as if he had never sipped from the bitter cup of instructive experience. Thus time imperceptibly flits away—thus life posts forward on its little journey ; whilst man, the giddy child of inconsideration, seldom begins to think, until the race is over, and he drops into the cold and dark aperture of the yawning grave.

SUCH was the train of my thoughts, and the perturbation of my troubled mind, when I arrived at the Vicarage.

I FOUND the worthy pastor assiduously employed in the instruction of his eldest son, a boy about six years of age. The little pupil attracted my attention and excited my delight by the quickness of his apprehension and the vivacity of his remarks. He was of a brown complexion, his features small, his eyes black, lively, and piercing. He held a *TELEMACHUS* in his hand, in which he had been reading. His father was assisting him to recapitulate the principal events that are contained in the book which he had perused, and pointing out to him, with clearness and precision, the danger and destruction which the youthful hero must have experienced, had he listened to the seductive enchantments of the goddess Calypso ; when little Brooke said, “ Indeed, papa, “ I think it was unkind in Telemachus to leave her “ so soon. Calypso saved him and Mentor from “ shipwreck, when they must have perished ; and it “ was very ungrateful to leave the island, where they “ had every thing they wanted.”

HERE Mr. Brooke entered upon an elucidation of the subject, convincing him, that had Telemachus continued with Calypso, he would unavoidably have been

been drawn into all manner of vice and effeminacy—would have forgotten his intention in leaving Ithaca, the search of his father Ulysses as well as his exposure of his mother Penelope to the daily insults of a lawless rabble,—and would himself have been insensibly lost to all emotions of virtue and glory. He entered not into an exposition of the *allegorical meaning*, as he told me he deemed it above the child's comprehension ; and concluded by saying, “ I hope, Charles, “ you will be as dutiful to your parents as Telema-
“ chus was to his.”

CHARLES answered, as he shut his book, “ Indeed papa, should you be lost, like Ulysses, I “ would travel over the whole world in search of “ you, and never return home until I had found “ you.”

MR. BROOKE, with a true paternal fondness, kissed his child, recommended him to the protection of Providence, and told him his lesson was finished.

CHARLES laid his book down and walked out. I took it up, and perceived the following verses written upon the blank leaves at the end of the volume. After I had perused, I begged Mr. Brooke's permission to transcribe them ; and being pleased with the moral, melancholy strain which pervades them, I send them to you, from a conviction that you will receive the same pleasure as I have, from the perusal.

ON A FAVOURITE CHILD, SIX MONTHS OLD.

O HAPPY BABE ! long happy be
In this thy state of infancy,
When joy and hope, and hope and joy,
By turns, thy parents breasts employ.

THIS soothes and cheers for labours done,
 That end not with the setting sun,
 But, through the darkness of the night,
 Tho' sleep be fled, yet gives delight :
 THAT smooths the sting of haggard strife,
 Amidst the busy scenes of life,
 When carking thoughts, and bleeding throes,
 Spring freely in this vale of woes.

O MAY'ST thou never feel the care
 Attendant on a parent's prayer ;
 The father's joy, the mother's hope,
 When fondness gives to fancy scope ;
 The ardent wish, that sees the child
 On the high top of favour pil'd ;
 The starting fear, the gloomy frown,
 Which see him tumbled headlong down,
 Amidst the grins of sneering hate,
 That ever warp this mortal state.

O LOVELY babe, wilt thou, when time
 Has led thy years up to their prime,
 Repay that care, those daily tasks,
 Thy helpless infancy now asks ;
 Nor e'er forget those sleepless nights,
 Those weary days, and soft delights,
 When clinging round and closely press'd
 To thy fond mother's panting breast ?

WILT thou, when hoary Age has spread
 His silver frost upon my head,
 Guard and protect thy reverend fire,
 And give that care my wants require,
 And shield me with that filial awe
 Congenial to great Nature's law ?
 When on the bed of death I lie,
 Wilt thou then close my fainting eye,

And,

And, the last duty I shall crave,
See me laid in the clay-cold grave?

WHAT ardent pleasure intervenes,
When I behold these happy scenes
In Hope's gay mirror!—If they're true,
I'd bid this world a kind adieu.

WHEN I was near the conclusion of my transcription, I heard a gentle rap at the door. Mr. Brooke attended—the door was shut behind him—I heard a whispering in the passage. Mr. Brooke re-entered, and seating himself opposite to me, just as I had finished, he smiled upon me, and said, “Mr. Wilton, I have received a letter, with a particular request to deliver it to no one but yourself;” at the same time presenting it to me.

No sooner had he concluded, than a sudden tremor shook my whole frame—I felt my face glow—the power of articulation was denied me, and I had not the presence of mind to take the letter which he held in his hand. He perceived my agitation, and desired me to recollect, that it was a lady who was my correspondent.

THIS gentle raillery sufficiently recalled my clouded reason, and I replied in a faltering tone, “I hope Mr. Brooke will excuse my weakness—it is a natural, and, I affirm, a virtuous one. It is the event I dread, not the reception of this letter,”—taking it out of his hand, and minutely examining it;—“may the contents be as favourable as I wish them, for thereon rests my future peace!

Mr. Brooke then informed me, that it was Olivia who rapped at the door, and delivered this letter to him, desiring him expressly to intrust it to no person but myself.

“ SUCH a benign condescension and speedy answer,” I said, “ was infinitely beyond my most sanguine expectation ; and if it contained a final dismissal, I was ultimately—But Heaven and Olivia be propitious !”

I BROKE the seal, and read the following answer to mine of yesterday, which as a confidential secret I intrust you with.

TO MR. WILTON.

“ SIR,

“ AFTER I retired to my chamber last night, I was very much surprised, on pulling out my handkerchief, to see a letter drop from it. Upon examining the superscription, I perceived the writing was unknown to me. Finding it sealed, and endeavouring in vain to recollect the receipt of a letter lately, my surprise encreased. After the perusal, I was still at a loss to conceive how you had managed the conveyance, until I remembered your complaisance in presenting me with my handkerchief, and immediately the whole mystery was unravelled.

“ I AM not so vain as to suppose that I possess any of those external perfections superior to the rest of my sex, to which you say you are become a captive, and which you so liberally ascribe to me. Flattery is a syren, insinuating and deceptive, which hath intoxicated many a female votary, and led her often unwittingly into the paths of fatal error and the destructive snares of vice. She captivates—she beguiles :—her breath is pernicious, and frequently lulls the credulous listener into a fatal security.

WHEN

" WHEN a woman is addressed by the artful
 " powers of such an assailant, it is a duty incumbent
 " upon her to weigh with deliberation, not only
 " every sentence, but every word, before she begin
 " to make the application, which may not only be
 " erroneous from our own partiality, but may be in-
 " strumental in leading her astray from the paths of
 " rectitude and filial duty. Though this is what
 " we ought all to do with the utmost caution, yet in
 " general, so agreeable and so subtle is the poison,
 " that the unwary falls a victim to delusive falsehood,
 " and finds too late, when Experience holds the
 " mirror, that she no longer enjoys her boalled
 " power of liberty and redemption.

" WHATEVER peculiarity may be in your case, I
 " have not the least objection to hear, but absolutely
 " protest against any further correspondence without
 " the actual permission of Sir Robert and Lady Ber-
 " tram. This they expect from me as my duty : I
 " owe it to them ; and I hope I shall never disap-
 " point that expectation, which is founded on affec-
 " tion, and supported by the unalienable bonds of sa-
 " cred friendship.

" You say your family is noble, and that you are
 " the unhappy heir of it. The nobility of a family
 " is certainly honourable, but I must assure you,
 " that with me it is no inducement. The little
 " knowledge which I have of life, the little expe-
 " rience I have had in the pursuit of happiness, have
 " convinced me, that Happiness is not always the
 " concomitant of Opulence, nor Discontent the child
 " of Poverty. We may often behold nothing more
 " than a splendid misery in the midst of affluence ;
 " and see Peace, with her handmaid Health, in the
 " humble scenes of rigid penury. Titles may con-

“fer distinction, when obtained as the reward of
 “merit ; then they are truly noble, and add a real
 “lustre to the wearer ; but when they are the meed
 “of servility and dependence, they only serve to
 “make dishonour more flagrant and demerit more
 “conspicuous.

“It is not my wish to add to your unhappiness.
 “This is a cruelty I never can practise ; but the
 “mystery which casts a veil over a great part of
 “your letter, must be unravelled before you can ex-
 “pect a more explicit declaration, or a further cor-
 “respondence, from

“OLIVIA.”

WHEN I opened this letter, the agitation of my mind, the tremor of every limb, and some other operative causes, cast such a shade before my eyes, that I actually could not distinguish one line from another. I wished, such was my anxiety to know my fate, to take in the whole contents at one single glance. When my vision became perfect, I read it over and over, and was riveted to my seat.

Mr. Brooke, from a thorough acquaintance with the œconomy of the human mind, was solicitous to relieve my perplexity, by withdrawing my attention from a subject in which I was totally absorbed. He arose from his seat, came towards me, and said,
 “Mr. Wilton, the morning is inviting—Nature
 “wears her richest livery—shall we partake of the
 “fragrance of the fields, and enjoy those rural
 “sweets which add a pleasing emotion to the mind,
 “and the gaiety of health to the body ?”

I IMMEDIATELY recollected my assignation with Mrs. Moreton. We walked forth. The “wood
 “notes

"notes wild" were in sympathy with my soul. As we advanced, my pretty black-bird saluted us with his wonted song. "Sing on," said I, "thou artless warbler, happy, thrice happy, in the possession of all thou desirest—time brings not care, and nature supplies thy wants."

I HAD my eyes fixed upon the little object of my expostulation, when I was addressed by a female voice. I looked round—it was Mrs. Moreton. I apologized for having disappointed her, and asked how long she had waited.

SHE answered, her time had been agreeably employed, as Miss Olivia had been with her a great part of it.

I THEN entered into a conversation with the good woman, in the conclusion of which I said, "I request you will continue in your present situation for some little time, until I can think of something more eligible for your acceptance, and depend upon me for the support of yourself and little ones."

SHE answered, "Your goodness and benevolence I can only repay with thanks, and the real effusion of a lasting gratitude. When that fails in me, let your beneficence be withdrawn, and may I be regarded as a wretch who is unworthy of commiseration."

GEORGE held out his little arms—I took him—he was better dressed than he was yesterday—he was conscious of it—and with all the simplicity of artless innocence held up the skirt of his frock for me to look at. I praised it, at which he seemed delighted.

Mrs. Moreton then informed me that our liberal donations, as she pleased to term them, had enabled her to clothe her little innocents, to provide for their subsistence several weeks, and had spread a ray of consolation over her mind to which she had long been a stranger.

I PUT another piece into George's hand; he gazed at it, and admired the brightness of its colour; and I added, that if it should be agreeable to Mr. Brooke, I would meet her from time to time at the Vicarage, when some plan might be concerted for her approbation, which might contribute to her ease, and supply her wants in the time to come.

MR. Brooke said, "I shall be happy to be an encourager of so laudable an undertaking; the motive is benevolence, and the object humanity."

SHE thanked us, whilst tears of gratitude streamed down her cheeks.

SHE departed. We walked further in the sweet enjoyment of the Western breeze.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXII.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR. WILTON.

SIR,

THE purport of your last letters discovers the state of your mind. From the first mention of the lady I suspected your partiality; and my suspicions are now confirmed. I am apt however to conclude, that whatever amiable qualities the lady may possess, whatever

whatever her fortune and expectations in life may be, it will be impossible ever to obtain your father's acquiescence. He is now so refractory, so jealous of his authority, so dictatorial in his commands, that your worthy mother is absolutely forbid to mention your name in his presence ; and my dear Antonet is confined a prisoner, without one individual of the family daring to intercede for her release. How this unhappy occurrence will terminate, it is altogether impossible to conjecture ; whether to the satisfaction of one or more of the individuals immediately concerned, or to the final disgrace of the first aggressor, who, though a parent, cannot rationally acquit himself of every degree of culpability, at the impartial tribunal of deliberative justice. The uncertainty is tedious and irksome to every party, destructive of unanimity, and subversive of confidence.

WHAT can be the cause of such a wide difference between the sentiments of youth and the opinions of age, in the important article of marriage ? Both are supposed to be endowed with a degree of reason sufficient to direct them through every other path of life ; but in this, there is too often a variance of sentiment, which frequently terminates in confirmed disgust and a lasting separation. Fatal difference ! that parents and children, whose interests ought to be inseparable, should be disunited and alienated from one another through the baneful influence of interest or ambition, is really pitiable. But so it has happened, and where connections are to be formed, families supported, and poverty screened, by the intriguing views of avarice, the fastidious pretensions of pride, and the humiliating cringes of abject servility, it will so continue to happen, to the latest period of time.

IN the midst of these moral, or, as some will term them, unduteous observations, I had almost forgot the subject which I meant to communicate.

A FEW days ago, I had the pleasure of a visit from a Mr. BOWMAN, a Serjeant at Law in one of the Inns of Court. We were schoolfellows, and the closest intimacy, formed on the broad basis of reciprocal kindness, has through life uninterruptedly subsisted between us. You have frequently heard me mention his intellectual acquisitions and unfulfilled integrity in terms of the highest approbation. He has been a son of adversity, but by unwearied diligence and indefatigable perseverance has at length attained to eminence in his profession. He has often told me in the modest exultation of an honest heart, that, conscious of a want of opulent connection, and a certain independence to enable him to push forward through the busy labyrinths of the law, he for years after his inauguration saw nothing but penury, gaunt and perilous penury, stare him in the face; but that being determined to proceed, his application became more vigorous, his progress proportionably rapid, and he soon had the triumphant satisfaction to behold many competitors, who began their career with potent friends and independent fortunes, lagging far behind in the arduous pursuit.

WITH this companion of my early years I expected to have passed a few happy days. My expectation was vain, my disappointment mortifying, since both you and I were involved in the eventful series of his information. I recollect one of your letters, in which you expressed a wish that this journey to London might not prove ominous; and by that wish you seem to have anticipated the artful designs of your enraged father; enraged beyond the bounds

bounds of common decency—enraged at his children for daring to think, to act, and exert those powers with which the Creator of Man hath endowed them. He is now attempting to entail infamy, shame, and poverty on his offspring, merely because the world pronounces them to be wiser and more judicious than himself.

I AM not blessed, Wilton, with your philosophic turn of mind ; for when provoked and ill treated, I must retaliate. When insulted and irritated, even by the father of my friend and mistress, I cannot shield myself with the passive tameness of Stoical apathy, so as to bear it with patience, and sit down calmly under the pressure of apparent ignominy. No ; my resolution recoils at the attack, my patience disdains the unjust reproach, and I feel myself uneasy under the injurious insinuations of a man whom I once esteemed, because he is the parent of my dear Antonet.

You will say I am angry ; but what is the cause ? O Wilton, pardon my warmth ! I am hurried on by the indulgence of passion, by the perturbation of spirits which the machinations of inveterate malice have inspired, and in which not only your present happiness but your future welfare is deeply involved.

THESE digressive ebullitions, the emanations of an ill-governed fury, your candour will, I trust, forgive. You know I am apt to take fire at ill-treatment, and I have more than once received it from your father.

AFTER the usual congratulations of absent friends, Mr. Bowman asked me, with a very serious look, and a tone of profound gravity, if I was acquainted with the Earl of Wilton. Having answered him in the

affirmative, he told me, that he had received a visit, at his chambers, from the Earl upon very important business, for the prosecution and completion of which he had undertaken the present journey.

SURPRIZED and alarmed at this, I said, with much earnestness, "Pray, Mr. Bowman, may I presume, upon the strength of a long friendship, to enquire the nature of this very important business?"

He very gravely replied, "Why do you enquire with so much earnestness? If you will answer my interrogatory ingenuously, I may probably satisfy you in your turn."

I THEN informed him, without the least reserve, of my long acquaintance with the family, of my intimate connection with your sister, and of my expectation of being hereafter united to it by the most tender of all alliances.

He replied, with a smile, "All this, Mr. Benfield, I was before perfectly acquainted with."

I LOOKED eagerly on him—he saw my surprize, and continued, "I perceive your surprize at what I have said, and must inform you, that I am come purposely from London to frustrate all your expectations of such an alliance."

I AROSE from my chair in much emotion—while Bowman, retaining the same gravity of countenance—adjusting his wig with both his hands, and throwing himself carelessly back in his chair,—seemed to enjoy my anxiety.

AFTER I had paced a few times across the floor, he said, "Mr. Benfield!"

I LOOKED at him, and observed his muscles had relaxed a little, and that some small degree of risibility was visible upon his countenance.

"I PERCEIVE," he continued, "your emotion, and wish not to add to your solicitude, but rather to alleviate it, if my interference could operate with so benign an influence. To answer your question, I inform you, as a confidential friend, in whose bosom I have often reposed my secrets without the least dread of their being improperly discovered, that Lord Wilton waited upon me to consult me on the possibility of cutting off the entail of his estate, in order to disinherit his son, whom he termed the most disobedient of children, and he thereby impowered to reward his daughters in proportion to their duty. I expressed my doubts of the possibility of perfecting such a deed without the voluntary consent of his son, as heir at law; but he desired I would wait upon him at Wilton-Park, to examine the instruments by which the estate is settled; adding, that if his son would not, for a certain pecuniary consideration, give an immediate acquiescence, he should live and die under the horrid imprecation of a justly incensed parent."

MR. Bowman described to me, that he expostulated gently with him on the returning affection of a parent, and the renewal of duty in a child; but that he lost all temper, and replied, "I came here, Sir, for advice on a legal question, not to be dictated to upon the duty of a father. I have already apprized you of the attachment of my eldest daughter, which if she continue, the same paternal

“nal denunciation shall be her marriage portion. I
“scorn to connive at the disobedience of my chil-
“dren. If they do not *love* me, I am determined
“to make them *fear* me.” He then asked Mr. Bowman to take a journey to Wilton-Park on the business proposed, promising that he should be amply rewarded for his trouble. Mr. Bowman consented, and Lord Wilton immediately took his leave.

AFTER my friend Bowman had given me this intelligence, and delivered his opinion on the impracticability of legally executing what Lord Wilton so urgently desired, our conversation became too general to be interesting to you. I exacted a promise from him, however, that he would inform me of every measure that should be adopted in the prosecution of this unnatural undertaking; having first convinced him of the propriety of such a conduct, from the cruelty of a father attempting, under the sanction of law, to deprive his children of their patrimonial inheritance. He cheerfully acquiesced with my arguments, and soon after departed for Wilton Park.

HAVE I not sufficient reason to be angry, and to animadvert with some severity on the behaviour of a father who can thus deliberately adopt a measure, which if executed would involve his offspring in inevitable ruin?

MAN, thou sovereign, thou tyrant, of the creation! why this perversion of those faculties which the benevolent Creator of the universe hath bestowed upon thee to distinguish and exalt thee so superlatively above all thy fellows of the dust? Go to the forest, to the savage herd, and learn affection; learn that tenderness to which the callousness of thy disposition

sion is too often a stranger! Go—But what comes here? A letter!—I know the writing, and pant for the contents; which when I have perused, you shall likewise participate of the pleasure or solicitude which they convey.

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

I AM yet under imprisonment, without one hope of a speedy liberation. But not being prohibited the use of pen, ink, and paper, I shall employ some of my vacant hours in acquainting you with every material circumstance that happens in our distracted family, and of which I am faithfully apprized by the affectionate assiduity of my dear mother, and the unalienable regard of my sympathizing sister. My honoured mother!—I see her affliction; her sorrow is conspicuous through all her attempts to conceal it; many a heavy sigh escapes from her heaving bosom, swelled with the deepest grief. Absorbed in the gloom of anxiety, she sighs out her solitudes, whilst by a sudden recollection she endeavours in vain to recall them. Her usual hilarity is fled, her former cheerfulness is dwindled into a forced smile, and her health is visibly on the decline.

THIS melancholy change is apparent to all the family:—every servant is conscious of it; and they recite their fears to each other, with tears in their eyes, on the approaching fate of the best of mistresses; whilst my father, blinded by his prejudices, treats

treats her with the same superciliousness which hath so conspicuously marked his character through life. Hateful task ! but justice compels me thus to delineate the deportment of my parent, whom Religion and Nature teach me to obey. Fear is a slavish principle, the companion of guilt, and is too frequently exacted by the votaries of overbearing authority. It may command servility, but can never meet with the smallest esteem.

As soon as my father arrived from London, my mother met him at the door with the smiles of joy, and gave him a welcome home. He sullenly thanked her, and hastily passed by. Surprised at the coolness of this reception, she followed him, after a little interval, into the parlour : the ensuing scene you know already. After my recovery she returned, and a solemn silence ensued. To manifest his indifference, my father calmly hummed a tune, and when kindly asked after his health since his departure, he never so much as vouchsafed to look at the dear enquirer, but carelessly continued his tune,

THOUGH wrung to the soul with his contemptuous behaviour, she affected not to observe it, but said with a tone of complacency, " My Lord, had I been acquainted with your intention of visiting the metropolis at this season, I should have taken the liberty to trouble you with the management of some little business I had to transact there."

He answered, " It was, my Lady, purely to avoid such a trouble that I did not deem it requisite to give you any previous notice of my departure."

SHE replied, "It would not, my Lord, have been much, and you might have completed it in the space of a few minutes. I ever thought it my duty to inform you of the most insignificant of my movements, in order either to receive your orders, or to obey your inhibitions."

HE retorted, "The duty which you boast of, you have with a vengeance inculcated into your children, who, with an effrontery unparalleled, have opposed themselves to my determinations, which you and they ought to have acceded to with readiness and submission. Henceforth, let not the word *duty* be prostituted by such a servile acceptance as confers disgrace upon the term, and duplicity upon those who artfully pretend to screen their machinations under the speciousness of such a veil."

"I HOPE," replied my mother, "you do not wish to include me under the odium of this general censure?"

HE returned, "I include every one who hath ever had the audacity even to expostulate with the justice or propriety of my opinions. I expected they should have been final and conclusive; but you, by illicit practices and wilful connivance, have instilled the cordial of self-approbation, and cherished the seeds of disobedience with so much success, that my whole offspring have actually risen into an unnatural rebellion against me. But I will be revenged; I will have an ample and a full revenge upon the degenerate ingrates! who, spurning my advice, and rejecting my counsel, have plunged themselves into such an unfathomable abyss as all your fine-spun artifice shall never be able to extricate them from."

BEING violently agitated, and his utterance rendered indistinct by his vehemence, he arose from his chair, and abruptly left the room.

My dear mother came immediately to me :—her eyes were swimming in tears—the paleness of her looks, the trembling of her whole frame, startled, alarmed, and terrified me. She sat down by me, and wiping away her tears, said, “O Antonet, I am
“truly unhappy, and have lived to see those days
“wherein I have no pleasure. My marriage was
“unpropitious, yet I complied with the injunctions
“of my parents, vainly hoping to taste of that felicity which ought to be reciprocal in the marriage
“state, and which is the result of a congeniality of
“disposition, softened and endeared by a mutual interchange of social delights and unabating affection. I vainly expected that my implicit acquiescence with your father’s humours, my ready compliance with all his demands, would, in time, have
“so far attracted his attention, as to have screened
“me from insult and the humiliating silence of disdain. I acted from a conviction that I was right,
“and I have been fatally disappointed. O Antonet ! it
“was my morning and evening prayer to the Allwise
“Disposer of Events, that his mercy might be so
“far extended to me, that I might live to see my
“Henry, my Antonet, and my Sophia, finally settled in life, and then I could have closed my eyes in
“peace, resigned my soul into the hands of her Creator, and left my grey hairs to be silently laid in the
“dust by you, my beloved children.”

SHE paused—a fresh stream of tears gushed from her eyes, whilst I gently kissed them from her pallid cheek, and fruitlessly attempted to alleviate her sorrow.

SOPHY

SOPHY entered, and, seeing her venerable parent overwhelmed in grief, ran to her, and throwing her arms around her neck, kindly enquired into the cause of her sorrow.

“ ALAS ! my children, may Heaven, when I am
 “ mouldering in the grave, whither I am hastening
 “ very fast, bless you for your affection. Let reli-
 “ gion be your practice, and virtue your guide
 “ through life : then, if you err, you are the less
 “ culpable ; it is an error of ignorance. Remember
 “ the instructions of a parent, who ever loved you,
 “ and died with your names engraven on her heart.
 “ —That heart, when it shall cease to beat, will end
 “ a life of misery.—My children ! O my Henry !”
 —Here her eyes closed—her tongue faltered, her
 drooping head sunk upon my bosom.

IN this trying scene of distress we had the presence of mind to carry and lay her gently upon the bed, and then, as the only alleviation, sat down, one on each side of her, to weep away our sorrows.

DURING the silence of this mournful scene, when the finest feelings of the soul were tremblingly alive to the softest touch of woe, the soothing glance of grief darted across the bed, and added to the mutual sympathy of our soft suffusion. We sat silently weeping over the apparently lifeless body of our beloved parent, watching with anxiety for the return of that life which would, with one word, have added wings to our sorrow, and substituted the smile of joy in the place of frowning grief. The door opened, and George entered, with a summons for his Lady to attend upon his Lord in the parlour. I looked at him—my tears flowed afresh—I pointed to my dear mother—he stepped to the bedside—he looked and wept.

wept.—She sighed—then opened her eyes, and after a little pause said, “Alas! where am I?”

How sweet, how grateful was the sound of her voice! Our fears were instantly dispelled, and hope returned with cheerful and increasing rays. I replied with eagerness, “My dear mother is in her daughters chamber.”

“God be praised,” said she, “for all his mercies, and shed his blessings upon you, my dear children, for all your kindness!”

I THEN requested George to go and acquaint his master that his Lady was rather indisposed, and had retired to take a little rest.

He presently returned, and gave me two letters, which he said his Lord had sent for the perusal of his Lady, and desired they might be returned with all imaginable dispatch. I desired George to acquaint my father that the letters should be sent down stairs as soon as my mother had perused them.

ON inspection, I perceived that Sir George Silvertop, with a benevolence characteristic of him, being grieved for the distress of our family, occasioned by the projected union with his daughter, had written a consolatory letter to my father, endeavouring to appease him and palliate the supposititious disobedience of his son. The other letter contained my father's answer. I thought it no literary plagiarism to transcribe them, and prevailed upon my sister to assist me in the venial-trespass. I send you the pilfered copies enclosed, in full assurance of your transmitting them to my much-injured brother, whose cause Sir George pleads with an honest energy. You will perceive

perceive by the answer what reception his good intentions met with ;—spurned and derided for those admonitory counsels which the wisest of the sons of men might adopt without the least impeachment of the soundness of their intellects.

My father has, for some days, been closely shut up in his study with a strange gentleman ; and, from the secrecy observed, there is certainly some business of importance upon the tapis, but what it is no one of the family can surmise ; though we all hope it is no matrimonial engagement with any branch of the family ; in confidence of which I subscribe myself

Your's, &c.

ANTONET WILTON.

P. S. My maid will convey this secretly to Wilton-Wood, where Jane Moore, my old nurse, resides. She is engaged in our interest, and your future correspondence will be safely received through that channel, without any suspicion.

LETTER XXIV.

SIR GEORGE SILVERTOP TO THE EARL OF WILTON.

MY LORD,

WHEN you first proposed an union betwixt our families, I received the proposal with satisfaction, considering it not only unexceptionable, but advantageous, and honourable. On this view, I looked forward with anxiety for the completion of a marriage, which I hoped would bring an increase of happiness to my old age—Foolishly anticipating the pleasure I expected to receive, I formed an idea of my little grand-children playing, prattling, and
lisp

lissing around my knees. This visionary scene of pleasure is now vanished, and I am afraid my evening sun will set in the gloom of misery. The morning of my days was embittered by an unfortunate incident, which destroyed my happiness, and left me a martyr to the stings of inveterate woe. The dear image of her I lost is written in indelible characters upon my heart, and can only be erased when it shall cease to beat.

YET why should I grieve, when I reflect that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. This is the opinion of one of the wisest of the sons of Adam, whose experience in life had taught him the vanity of wishing for unalloyed happiness. There is only one path by which we can attain this wish, and that is, by a constant perseverance in the duties of religion, and an unceasing attachment to the precepts of virtue. The latter is the invariable result of the former ; for where true religion exists, there a life of virtue, and frequently a life of peace, will constantly be found ; a happiness we ought eagerly to grasp at, but which we too frequently despise, as too easily attainable. Religion affords an asylum for the afflicted, and a sure refuge for the miserable. I write from experience : affliction made me religious ; religion brought me peace.

INFORMED of your son's departure from Wilton-Park, I took the liberty of waiting upon you, ardently wishing to produce a reconciliation, by which an only and deserving son might be restored to the comforts of his worthy family. This was my only motive ; and though at that time my attempt failed of success, I cannot lay aside all hope of restoring tranquillity to a family, from whom I have been in some respects the involuntary instrument of alienat-
ing

ing so invaluable a blessing. As a preparatory step, if it will prove in the least efficacious, I hereby relinquish all engagements, and totally give up all claims, which we have entered into and mutually interchanged, for the future satisfaction and security of both parties. Neither irritated by the refusal, nor chagrined at the disappointment of this honourable alliance, I consider it my duty, as a christian and as a father, to reconcile, if it be possible, the differences which have happened between such near relatives, by inducing a discussion of the causes by which they were originally produced, and which probably are not well understood.

I MAKE this sacrifice the more willingly, because I consider youth like a stream, which when pure and limpid affords an exquisite pleasure in beholding its surface; but when ruffled by the winds, it becomes turbulent and deformed: instead of deriving pleasure from the prospect, we retire from it in disgust. This I conceive to be truly emblematical of the mind of youth. When it is unruffled by contending passions, we experience a pleasure in the contemplation, and more in the enjoyment of that serenity which then surrounds it. But when it is enraged by opposition, or treated fastidiously by authority, that internal impulse of freedom which the God of Nature has implanted in the human breast, rises with disdain, and boldly spurns at the restrictions which a too strict obedience would exact.

LET us consider, my Lord, that you and I were once young. Let us reflect, that we enjoyed the same rational faculties with which we are now endowed, though not matured by experience, nor brought to perfection by the mellowing hand of time. This consideration, I hope, will somewhat extenuate

the *supposed* criminality of a son, whose merits I have heard you dwell upon with delight. Granting that this single trespass is the result of rashness or even of disobedience, yet why should a single crime, and that surely a pardonable one, for ever alienate a deserving child from a father's affection? O my Lord, were our Almighty Creator to mark in the extreme whatever we do amiss, how should we expect forgiveness at that tribunal before which we must all one day appear. The divine mercy is a precedent worthy of our imitation; and though from the imperfection of our natures we may fall infinitely short of such an example, yet our endeavours to imitate it will be meritorious, and our advances finally rewarded.

I HOPE your Lordship will pardon the presumption of a man who cautiously wishes to advise, yet dreads to dictate; whose chief aim is the dissemination of peace and good will; and who wishes to act to all mankind as he would be acted to.

I am, &c.

G. SILVERTOP.

LETTER XXV.

FROM THE EARL OF WILTON TO SIR GEORGE
SILVERTOP.

SIR,

THE receipt of your extraordinary epistle I acknowledge, and must acquaint you, that I am not accustomed to be dictated to upon the subject of my domestic concerns.

I KNOW

I know that I have been young, Sir George, and likewise know that I am now advanced in life ; but this knowledge I had obtained previous to your very officious interference in an affair concerning which I have taken my determinate measures, and from which I am firmly resolved not to deviate, in compliance with the busy interposition of any self-opinionated individual.

HAD I asked your advice, I should have received your counsel with that deference which is ever due to the obligations of friendship. But as this intrusion was voluntary on your part, you must not be surprised, if it be received with that neglect and indifference which is the just reward of such unwelcome opinions. I am not conscious that any part of my conduct, since the commencement of our acquaintance, could warrant such an interference ; and I must seriously reprobate the determinations of any man, who implicitly concludes that I am incapable of domestic government. Such conclusions are generally formed upon mistaken principles, and probably upon false appearances, since nothing is more obnoxious to error than those opinions which we venture to entertain with respect to the private conduct of other men. The truth of this observation, the experience of every day will confirm ; and you must acknowledge, that different men ever had and ever will have different opinions concerning the same subject. Am I to incur the reproach of criminality, because I have not precisely the same view of things that you have, or do not see them through the same perspective that you do ? Am I to regulate my thoughts by the criterion which you may deem just and right, without being permitted to draw my own conclusions ? I have hitherto supposed myself a rational being, endowed with the same intellectual faculties as my fellow-creatures,

creatures, and capable of determining what is right and what is wrong, especially in affairs which relate particularly to myself. This supposition, however, is, I perceive, now called in question; and you take the unwarrantable liberty of boldly telling me, that I am incapacitated for so arduous a task. I am, however, hardy enough to dare to deviate from the wisdom of your resolutions, and inform you, that my forgiveness of my son's disobedience shall be, if ever, a voluntary act, and not extorted by the officiousness of any individual in the universe. By this determination to think for myself, I do not suppose that I transgress any of the fundamental principles of religion or morality, whose chief view in their primitive establishment was the inculcation of virtue, and the practice of every social duty. Religion is very express in teaching obedience, not only in children to their parents, and in subjects to their governors, but requires it generally from all inferiors to their superiors; and shall I incur the displeasure of the Divinity for a strict exaction of what he himself hath taught us as an immutable and unerring law? To answer in the affirmative would be a downright absurdity, and yet I think the whole tenor of your doctrine displays a perfect congeniality deducible therefrom. Religion is venerable, but it should never be made a tool of to screen the principles of disobedience, which ever originate in the destructive dictates of immorality. Let us revere and receive her precepts with an implicit submission. Cavilling is the road to error; to examine too minutely what Infinite Wisdom has enwrapped in mystery, is to plunge into the blind abyss of deception, and to wander without a guide.

You say you are willing to relinquish all engagements, and give up all the claims, which we had reciprocally entered into; but why would you make
a virtue

a virtue of necessity ? You must be very confident that they are all annihilated by my son's absolute refusal to fulfil them. But this I can assure you, his obstinacy shall cost him dear, and he may live to rue the day when he refused to give his hand to your daughter. In this instance, Sir George, I should have thought that my age, my rank, my family, might have shielded me from impertinence ; and prevented you from obtruding with so much flippancy a memory of my proposed alliance.

SUPPOSE the proposal did originate with me, the completion of it, you are well assured, would have added dignity to your family, if mine had received no derogation. The antiquity of my house is well known, and its celebrity such as would reflect an additional lustre, by an union, on the noblest in the British annals. Then why remind me of my proposed alliance ? The obligation on my part was certainly more than mutual ; it would have conferred honour, and such an acquisition was much more than an overbalance for any pecuniary consideration that could have been received.

AVARICIOUS mortals may reprehend my conclusions ; but real dignity is generally of too fine a texture to be perceived by the grossness of their optics. In this view of the case, my pardon would be a work of supererogation ; for voluntary presumption is always sure of creating disgust, seldom of conciliating respect or good-will.

I am, &c.

WILTON.

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LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE perusal of your last packet has given me great concern, not so much from the important intelligence of your friend, the generous Mr. Bowman, as from the melancholy description of my venerable parent's affliction.

O MY mother, forgive me for being, though involuntarily, the instrument to your distress! Could I have foreseen this unhappy event, I would gladly have sacrificed my own peace to your comfort. I was a stranger to my father's inflexibility, and that harshness of disposition which embitters your days, and brings sorrow upon your gray hairs. O forgive me, forgive your truly unhappy son, and let my present penitence atone for my past inconsiderateness! The day may come, and propitious Heaven grant it to the earnestness of my wish, which may not only alleviate your misery, but add a gleam of real joy to brighten your setting sun.

THE restraint under which my sister is kept is indefensible, for I cannot perceive any offence which she hath committed; but if I be not mistaken in my conjectures, it will not be long that she will remain in durance. I know her spirit, and I know her resolution. There is but one tie—it is, to be sure, a very important one. There are however restrictions at which the meanest spirit will spurn with indignation;

tion ; and when the moment of retribution comes, remember, Benfield, you treat the fair, the generous fugitive with that kindness, with that affection, which so noble a sacrifice demands. I know the open generosity of your nature, and that such a caution is totally unnecessary ; you will therefore smile at the anxiety of a brother, who, as you know, believes you worthy of his sister's love.

THE communication of Mr. Bowman has not alarmed me. The conduct of my father since my departure from Wilton-Park has taught me to expect the worst from his harshness and obstinacy, and has inured my mind to meet with fortitude the severest stroke that malice or misfortune can aim at my devoted head. But since you have engaged this honourable lawyer to apprise you of every movement in this iniquitous proceeding, if there be a possibility of its accomplishment without my approbation or consent, I think it a duty I owe to myself and family to attempt to frustrate it by a solemn appeal to the highest legal tribunal. If I should be unsuccessful, I shall patiently sit down under my disappointment, and, with all the resignation and resolution of the christian and the man, repress the unavailing sigh, and tacitly drink the unpalatable draught. The taste of poverty at first may be somewhat bitter, but custom, that sweetener of every evil, will soon render it familiar, if not agreeable.

NATURE is an indulgent nurse, and wherever we survey her operations, whether in the animate or inanimate creation, we are immediately struck with the regular œconomy which pervades the whole. We see a warmth of affection resulting from mere instinct, which puts the human race to the blush. The relative duties between parent and offspring are ex-

emplified by the nicest discrimination, and might afford an instructive lesson to the boasted children of reason. Even in the inanimate creation we may trace such distinctive order, and regular progression, thro' every vegetative operation, through every incremental function, as strike the mind of the inquisitive observer with wonder, astonishment, and awe ! Man alone is retrograde.—But the very idea is derogatory and humiliating.

CONFIDENT of your vigilance and caution in an affair which so nearly concerns my present and future welfare, I can with more satisfaction to myself remain here, in the eager prosecution of a scheme on the favourable accomplishment of which depends my present peace. From the immediate communication of the intelligence Mr. Bowman gives you, I shall with the utmost prudence and resolution regulate my own determinations, either to remain a silent spectator of the futility of my father's attempts, or commence an intrepid actor to frustrate them.

I now return to the recital of my own important pursuits. The morning after I received the letter from my dear Olivia, I was torn and agitated by a diversity of conclusions. I was absolutely forbid to attempt any further correspondence, without the previous approbation of Sir Robert Bertram ; and whether personally, or by letter, to acquaint him with the ardour of my passion, or to employ the worthy Mr. Brooke to perform this difficult task, was what I could not ultimately determine. Perplexed by the variety of projects which arose in my mind, I walked forth, convinced that when the turbulence of my thoughts should have a little subsided, I should devise more rationally, and conclude more wisely.

THE expanse of heaven was clear, grand, and magnificent; the western breeze was warm and delightful; the fragrance of the blossoms, opening to the morning sun, was cheering, agreeable, and extatic. The little warblers sweetly trilled their orisons, and seemed to hail my presence in their unfrequented retreats. I walked slowly forward, absorbed in contemplation, wrapt in the profoundest reverie, unable to conclude on any satisfactory procedure. My eyes were fixed upon the refreshing verdure of the fields, when I was suddenly startled by the sound of some prattling voices, and, looking up, I perceived Olivia with the two little sons of Mr. Brooke busied in the bottom of a hawthorn hedge, in the examination of the nest of my pretty songster.

THE incident, trifling as it was, afforded a favourable opportunity; but I felt a sudden chillness overspread me, which riveted me to the spot. I endeavoured to muster up sufficient resolution to move forward; but instead of resolution, a violent tremor succeeded, and I actually thought myself in the highest paroxysm of a fever.

How long I continued in this state of irresolution, or how long I might have continued, is uncertain, had not the shrill voice of my pretty cowslip-gatherer arrested my attention, and recalled my scattered spirits to their wonted functions, by crying out, "Miss Livy, Miss Livy, yonder is Mr. Wilton!"

SHE looked around—

I AWAKED, as from a trance, and, though conscious of my present diffidence, walked to the little party.

UPON my approach confusion was visibly depicted on the countenance of Olivia, whatever might be the cause, whether from being caught in so puerile, yet innocent, amusement, or from the presence of a person who so lately had made a discovery of the passion which her charms had kindled in his bosom: however it was, I was certain of my own emotion.

WE were both silent.

MY eyes were fixed upon the lovely object: whenever she raised her's from the ground, they met mine, and immediately her face was overspread with a crimson suffusion, which added a grace to her natural beauty, fascinating and irresistible.

I SIGHED involuntarily, but found myself altogether incapable of communicating what I felt.—I stepped nearer—and ventured to take hold of her hand. The touch was electrical, and my heart and pulse beat quicker from the effect. “O Olivia,” said I, “may I crave your forgiveness for this presumptuous encroachment on your rural privacy?”

SHE answered, “You have not offended me, and therefore my forgiveness is unnecessary.”

I REPLIED, “Have I then the exquisite pleasure of pouring forth in your presence the ardour of a flame as pure as ever glowed in a human breast?”

SHE rejoined quickly, “Hold, Mr. Wilton, I have already apprized you of the terms on which I can admit of your addresses; the reasonableness of those terms is apparent, and I hope your own good sense will convince you of the impropriety.”

“ priety there would be in listening to solicitations
“ which my duty and my honour may severely repre-
“ hend.”

I FELT the ascendancy of her argument ; its influence quite unhinged me ; and I was framing an answer, when an unwelcome visitant accosted us.

“ I PERCEIVE, Madam, it was not fit that Sir Robert and Lady Bertram should know of your retreat this morning ; your assignation was of such a nature as ought to elude enquiry.”

AT the brutal asperity of this sarcasm, Olivia darted a glance of sovereign indignation and contempt, but said nothing.

I FIXED my eyes with a look of disdain on the satirist. This was no other than Mr. Fennell, who added, “ Sir, you are no stranger to my pretensions to this lady ; your illicit practices therefore deserve the severest animadversion.”

“ PRETENSIONS ! illicit practices !” exclaimed Olivia, walking off with her little companions, and darting a look at him which at once displayed her scorn and contempt.

MR. Fennell was preparing to follow her, but I called to him, “ Stop, Sir, your conduct and expressions require some explanation.”

WITHOUT turning round, he replied, “ None, Sir, none ;” and then walked away, in company with the lovely object of all my wishes.

THE passiveness of my behaviour, Benfield, may probably add courage even to cowardice, and stimulate him to a repetition of deliberate insult. But repetition may arouse what the utmost valour cannot always oppose. Although I am not vindictive, yet I am not over-patient under the pressure of repeated ill-treatment. I am, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

SIR,

THE more I reflected upon the behaviour of Mr. Fennell, the more it appeared to me extraordinary, vulgar, and indefensible. His motive was evidently jealousy founded on surmise. The little attentions which I had hitherto paid to Olivia, and the predilection which I had discovered for her from our first acquaintance, had not escaped his vigilance and penetration. Unaccustomed to the vulgarity of such sarcasms, I found myself somewhat uneasy, and ardently wished to wipe away the illiberality of his aspersions by an immediate conference with Sir Robert Bertram.

THIS resolution being taken and duly weighed, I walked slowly towards Bertram-Hall, ruminating on the success of the discovery which I was about to make, and on which might probably depend all the events of my future life. I was conscious of the purity and fervour of my passion, of the integrity of my views, and the rectitude of my intentions; but then, there

there were many and weighty considerations which might deter me from the final consummation of my wishes, and which might not only involve me in inextricable difficulties, but even in inevitable perdition. The prospect before me was gloomy, melancholy, and discouraging, without one cheering ray of hope to enliven my present expectations.

O BENFIELD ! it is when a man is thus circumstanced, and enveloped with dangers and difficulties, that he hath the greatest cause for a strenuous exertion of that fortitude which hath ever distinguished the wise man. In the midst of perplexity and vexation, of humiliation and neglect, he weighs and deliberates, he resolves and acts with that probity and candour, with that calmness and patience, which justly denominate him good, virtuous and upright. Many illustrious examples of antiquity occurred to my memory, of men who, being encompassed with perils and overwhelmed with misfortunes, had remained collected and unconcerned, though attacked with the utmost rancour, and assailed with the envenomed shafts of the most inveterate malice ; for, enrobed with innate virtue, they chose to fall heroic triumphant victims, rather than yield to the impetuous torrent of vice and immorality.

I SOUGHT for a character whose merits I might in a fit of enthusiastic ardour attempt to equal by a bold and daring emulation ; or by adopting his passive apathy, and cool contempt of sublunary transactions, behold without emotion the inevitable ruin of my fortune, the discomfiture of all my well-laid schemes, the defeat of my father's avarice, and the wreck of my own aspiring ambition.

ELATED

ELATED, and not depressed, with my present unfortunate situation, I deemed, in this moment of contemplation, my involuntary exile and corroding solicitude rather meritorious than reprehensible; so apt are we to embrace the glittering baubles of deception, whenever they coincide with our warped and mistaken opinion! I was, at this instant, a dupe to my own imaginary consequence, under the delusive supposition that I was a willing martyr in the amiable cause of virtue.

How many, and even great men, both amongst the ancients and moderns, have laboured under the same fallacy, and bewildered themselves in all the inextricable mazes of error! From a conviction of the impossibility of being wrong, and fascinated with their own opinion relative to causes and effects, they have fabricated the wildest chimeras and given birth to the maddest conceptions of the human imagination. Humiliating thought! that the greatest minds should be capable of the greatest errors, and transgress with that presumption at which a vulgar mind would start and tremble. But a cool reflection silently whispered, "What art thou, poor vain mortal! Thy misfortunes, if they can be so denominated, are of thy own acquisition; and since thou hast had the audacity to commit errors, learn philosophy, and complain not."

SUCH were my thoughts when I arrived at the gates of Bertram-Hall. I had frequently before opened them with pleasure and with alacrity. I now paused, and viewed them with diffidence and timidity; recollecting, that the transaction of a few minutes might involve me in perplexity and care, in anxiety and sorrow. My silence on this affair was optional, my communication of it was the same; but when done, a retraction

retractation might not be so easy. Thus wavering and undetermined, I entered.—I was welcomed by the owners of the mansion. Olivia and Mr. Fennell were present. Olivia looked serious and grave; Mr. Fennell eyed me with fullness and contempt. Sir Robert was placid, composed, and thoughtful; whilst Lady Bertram, with a vivacity peculiarly characteristic, said, “Indeed, Mr. Wilton, I am glad you are come; for our conversation, previous to your entrance, was not only serious, but likely to take a disagreeable turn. Fennell was positively asserting that you are in love with Olivia, and that the voluntary admission of your future visits, as an unknown gentleman, would neither redound to the credit of our prudence nor Olivia’s delicacy.”

WHILST Lady Bertram was speaking, Olivia left the room.

I REPLIED, that “the blunt freedom of Mr. Fennell might probably be termed ingenuous and honest; but if critically examined by the laws of politeness and civility, it would certainly appear not only unbecoming, but even offensive; and that I was not conscious, upon the strictest scrutiny of my conduct since I had the honour of visiting there, of any impropriety of behaviour which might warrant such illiberality.”

“THE positive asseveration of Mr. Fennell on this topic,” answered Sir Robert, “I conclude to be nothing more than the airy conceptions of a lover’s brain, fabricated in the melancholy alembic of jealousy. He views Olivia with a favourable opinion, and has long danced attendance without making any visible progress in her good graces, and

“ and without even being able to defeat the officious-
 “ nefs of poor Mr. Longford, whose affiduities are
 “ often pleasing, but never disgustful. Pray, Mr.
 “ Wilton, what stay do you purpose to make in the
 “ North ?”

THIS interrogation, which was manifestly intended
 to change the subject, was evaded by the reply of
 Mr. Fennell, who said, “ Sir Robert, though I have
 “ long danced attendance after the beautiful Olivia,
 “ to what cause is it to be imputed that I have made
 “ no progress ? You have always eluded my attempt
 “ at an explanation, and carefully repressed my en-
 “ quiries, whenever I wished for information on a
 “ subject which so nearly concerned my happiness
 “ and welfare. I was very explicit ; you were very
 “ mysterious ; and though Olivia has not hitherto
 “ treated me with any apparent marks of personal
 “ attachment, I hope I shall not have the mortifica-
 “ tion to be finally discarded for this more favoured
 “ stranger, whose pretensions to family or fortune
 “ may be not only vague and ambiguous, but delu-
 “ sive, and falsely assumed.”

IRRITATED at the illiberality of the observation,
 I retorted, “ Sir Robert, it was my determination
 “ this day to avow my passion for Olivia, and solicit
 “ your permission to prefer my suit, after I had ac-
 “ quainted you with my family, fortune, and connec-
 “ tions. The illiberal aspersions of Mr. Fennell I
 “ shall treat with that contempt which they deserve,
 “ and with that silence which carries more disdain
 “ than the most expressive sarcasm. Know then,
 “ Sir Robert, Lady Bertram, and Mr. Fennell,
 “ That I really love Olivia—yes, love her with as
 “ pure a passion as can warm the human breast ; and am
 “ fully determined, if I am happy enough to merit the
 “ approbation

“ approbation of her honourable parents, immediately to prosecute with all the ardour of a real lover that passion, the happy and fortunate completion of which will alleviate an accumulating weight of sorrows, and woefully add (looking at Mr. Fennell) to your disappointment. Sir Robert, if you will be so obliging as to favour me with a private audience of a few minutes, I shall endeavour to frustrate the effect of every insinuation which envy may expect to operate to my discredit.”

SIR Robert arose, and whilst he was walking towards the door, Lady Bertram exclaimed, “ Mr. Fennell, what is the matter with you? Are you not well; or are you afraid of losing your mistress?”

Mr. Fennell replied, “ Sir Robert!”

SIR Robert turned round, when Mr. Fennell, with a hesitating and faltering tone, continued, “ As this gentleman has seemingly got something of importance to communicate, I desire you may not leave the room; I shall withdraw.”

HE was visibly agitated—his face was pale—his lips trembled as he spoke—and now and then he viewed me with a sullen aspect of resentment and malice. He bowed obsequiously to Sir Robert and Lady Bertram—again he eyed me—his colour changed—and, without a bow to me, he abruptly left the room.

LADY Bertram observed, that she could not help laughing at the manifest mortification and sullen deportment of Mr. Fennell, whose suspicions of a rival had cast a shade of illiberality over his conduct of late, which impartial justice must severely condemn,
and

and candour would abhor. "But come, Mr. Wilton, sit down and favour us with an explanation of some of your comic adventures. Cast away that grave face, and—"

"Hush, hush, my dear," said Sir Robert, "Mr. Wilton has something of another nature to impart, which may be of more consequence than to make you laugh."

I THEN told them my name, the cause why I had left Wilton-Park, and taken up my residence in the North, and, as a confirmation of what I said, offered them the perusal of my letters; which they politely refused. But I asked permission to address Olivia; and that was granted.

LADY Bertram said, she would not then laugh at what I had communicated, yet she hoped to live to see the day when she should indulge herself in that pleasure, without the fear of a rebuke from Sir Robert.

THOUGH I did not understand her meaning clearly, I added, I hoped her prophecy would prove true.

SHE curtsied, and replied, she would run and tell Olivia all the wonders she had heard, as she was certain they would please her.

SIR Robert thanked me for my ingenuousness, and said, Olivia should be perfectly left to her own decision in so important an affair. I assented to his candour, and retired.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

S I R,

I PERCEIVED my communication had exonerated my mind of a constant and pressing load of solicitude. I was perfectly easy from that fluctuation of sentiment which had kept my thoughts in the most disagreeable suspense, corroded my peace, and warped my judgement. I had long deliberated before I resolved ; I hesitated when I began to act ; but since I had performed my resolution, my conduct, in this particular instance, met with my warmest approbation and applause.

Thus, I believe, it often happens with a contemplative person : he is much more diffident of his own powers than one who is less conversant with the decisions of his own mind, less anxious for the event of futurity, and altogether careless as to the success of operations which the former even dreads to make the subject of meditation. The more any man *thinks*, it is an absolute certainty, the less he will *act* ; and when he is timid and suspicious, too fearful and solicitous, he frequently loses the fortunate hour of operation, which can never be recalled by the utmost exertion of human skill. Precipitation may be too hasty, and caution too slow.

WHILST I was agreeably employed in this musing strain, congratulating myself on the seeming success of my first advances, my hostess entered and informed me, that a gentleman at the door desired to speak with me.

ON

ON walking to the door, I saw Mr. Fennell, who acquainted me, that he called upon business of importance, which required an immediate discussion. I told him that I was ready to enter upon the discussion of any subject, if he would do me the favour to alight and walk in. He accordingly dismounted, and ordered his servant to walk the horses at no great distance, until they should be wanted.

As soon as we were seated, Mr. Fennell addressed me as follows : “ Sir, though you have not been long a resident in the North, you are no stranger to my pretensions to Olivia ; your present interposition therefore, with a view to thwart my pursuits, requires some explanation, and I am come this morning to demand it.”

I REPLIED, “ I was informed, Mr. Fennell, from a source of the highest credibility, from Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, that Olivia was under no pre-engagement, either to you or any other gentleman ; I therefore conclude that I have an undisputed right to become a candidate for her affections, without consulting the approbation of any individual whatever, except of those to whom she owes duty and obedience.”

He returned, “ I have nothing to do with what you conclude, Sir, nor will I be determined by your conclusions. You are very conscious of my prior right from my prior acquaintance ; and, having first paid my addresses, I think it but equitable that I should not be discarded by the lady in consequence of your interference.”

I COULD not forbear smiling during his delivery of these sentiments.

HS

HE observed me ; and said, " You may smile as
" you please, Sir, but I am determined—I will not
" be insulted by impertinence—I will not be super-
" seded by officiousness. My offers are honour-
" able, liberal, and, I think, unexceptionable ; and
" probably would, ere this, have been accepted by
" the dear object of all my wishes, had not you, like
" an evil star, shed a baleful influence, and imma-
" turely blasted all the opening buds of my pro-
" mising expectations."

HE was vehemently agitated—he grew pale and
livid—clashing and grinding his teeth : he viewed
me with the keen glance of indignation.

I replied, " Mr. Fennell, will you give me an
" open and ingenuous answer to a simple question ?"

" CERTAINLY," he replied.

" HAVE you then any positive promise from Oli-
" via by which you are authorized to interdict the ho-
" nourable addresses of any other gentleman ?"

HE answered sullenly and with some hesitation,
" I have not."

" THEN, Sir (I continued), your plea of a prior
" acquaintance certainly confers no right, nor pro-
" hibits any other gentleman from the laudable pur-
" suit of what you have only a distant hope of ob-
" taining. I consider every woman as a free agent,
" as mistress of her own actions, and amenable to no
" one, save to those whom God and nature have en-
" dowed with authority to exact obedience in confor-
" mity to their equitable dictates, by which her pre-
" sent welfare and future happiness may be ensured.

" Since,

“ Since, by your own acknowledgement, you have
“ no positive promise from Olivia, no exclusive pri-
“ vilege or distinguishing preference from Sir Ro-
“ bert and Lady Bertram, I cannot conceive any
“ right you have to issue a prohibitory mandate, for-
“ bidding any one to address the lady without your
“ authority.”

“ My right,” exclaimed he, springing from his
chair, “ I am determined to maintain; and I here
“ insist on your relinquishing all claim, and foregoing
“ all addresses, until I have my ultimate sentence
“ from the lips of Olivia herself.”

“ A MOMENT’S reflection, Sir,” resumed I, “ will
“ convince you of the impropriety of this behavi-
“ our, which derogates from your character as a gen-
“ tleman, without the least addition to the fund of
“ your intellectual attainments. I am not to be in-
“ timidated from my purpose by such an authoritative
“ interposition, nor deterred from a pursuit, on which
“ I am determinately bent, by this dictatorial inter-
“ ference. My hopes are yet in embryo, I am only
“ a novice in love; but I suppose you will not at-
“ tempt to impose an inhibition where you are very
“ confident you have no power.”

He rejoined, “ However you may dispute my
“ power, I am confident in my right. Priority of
“ possession, in equity and justice, always confers a
“ priority of right; and though you may by sophis-
“ tication combat my arguments, you will never
“ be able to overturn this self-evident principle.”

“ POSSESSION, Mr. Fennell, when legally and
“ justly obtained, always confers a right in things
“ which are either to be bought or sold; but where
“ is

“ is the analogy between the first advances for a lady’s affection and the highest bidder for a hunting horse ?”

THIS repartee being pronounced with somewhat of a sarcastic sneer, which the absurdity of his argument had stimulated, gave a loose to the ebullitions of a passion that neither prudence nor common sense could warrant.

“ MR. Wilton,” exclaimed he, “ your perseverance for the possession of my charming Olivia will provoke what your immediate recession will never prompt. You must instantly give me a satisfactory answer to a single question, or I here inform you, that your own behaviour shall either confirm me a steady friend or render me a formidable enemy. Will you acknowledge my prior claim, and apologize for your officious interposition ?”

“ MR. Fennell, you have verbally acknowledged you have no claim but what exists in your overheated imagination. To make an apology when I have committed no offence, would be a species of timidity with which I have hitherto been unacquainted; and, however I may wish to esteem you as a friend, I must inform you I will never purchase your friendship by such degenerate servility. As to your terrific threat of being a formidable enemy, I shall confide in the laws of my country for the defence of *my property*, and in my own arm for the safeguard of *my person*.”

He paused some time before he answered; at last he said, “ Is this Sir, your final determination ?”

I REPLIED, “ It is.”

“ THEN,”

"THEN," returned he, "since you refuse to settle this business amicably, you may rest assured of hearing from me in the space of a few days."

He retired without ceremony, and I smiled at his threat.

Now, Benfield, how do you suppose this affair will terminate? This rival attempted to brave me into a cowardly accommodation; I was steady to my purpose, and scorn to temporize with any man on so delicate an affair, much less to be intimidated and driven from the prosecution of a business wherein my present peace or final wretchedness is eventually involved.

BUT let me intreat you, O! solemnly let me beg of you, not to let a syllable of this conversation escape you in your correspondence with my sister, until you are apprized of its termination. I hesitated, when I sat down to write, whether I should or should not acquaint you with it; but a thorough conviction of your friendship and fidelity quickly removed my scruples, and I have communicated the whole business in an ample detail.

THE propriety of the above inhibition you will readily acknowledge. A mother's fears for the personal safety of her son, and a sister's timid thoughts ever presaging the worst of an event, would only embitter and add a deeper shade to that gloom of distress which at present pervades our once happy family.

O HAPPINESS! where is thy sequestered retreat! Thou hast escaped my most ardent search amidst the noise, the bustle, the din, and riot of the city; and here, in this solitary recess, where I vainly expected to have found thy habitation, thou again deceivest me

me, and corrodest my mind with the phantoms of Deception. Happy infancy ! that always givest enjoyment without the fretting sting of care ! Thy pleasures, though fleeting, were ever seasoned with the real zest of fruition.

I WAS anxious to see Mr. Brooke, that I might inform him of my reception by the Bertram family, and ask his advice in my affair with Mr. Fennell, which probably may be attended with very serious consequences. I found him, as usual, in his study. He was perusing the Metaphysics of ARISTOTLE, upon which he commented with much profundity and acuteness, saying, he wondered how so much learning and industry could be so ill applied to the elucidation of a subject that was enwrapped in impenetrable darkness, and had employed the utmost efforts of genius, and puzzled all the seminaries of Europe for so many centuries.

I REPLIED, “ A metaphysical disquisition, Mr. Brooke, even on the merits or demerits of that great master of all knowledge, has at present no charms for me.”

He smiled with complacence upon me.

I THEN informed him of my success, as I rapturously termed it, of being permitted to visit and pay my addresses to the loveliest of her sex.

He expressed his pleasure, and assured me I should find her, from a more intimate acquaintance, worthy of the appellation which I had, in the fondness of my passion, bestowed upon her.

I NEXT apprized him of my interview with Mr. Fennell, and the consequences that were likely to follow it.

He appeared very serious at the information, and said, " Mr. Fennell is a gentleman of an ample fortune, good connections, and of great authority in the county. His education was defective, and, from a constant attention to the savage amusements of the chase, he has contracted a rusticity, or rather a brutality in behaviour. He is impatient of the least controul, and the most gentle contradiction of his opinion throws him into a violent paroxysm of rage and fury. This *trait* in his conduct, I suppose, he has acquired from an association with his menial domestics, whom he rules with the rod of tyranny ; sometimes making them the companions of his amusement ; at others, upon the smallest transgression, or even omission of their expected duty, treating them with all the severity which an irritated malice can suggest. Hence he is served by the trembling tools of fear and servility, and meets with no esteem from those whom his ample fortune compels to surround and flatter, but not to love and respect him. His tenants are in general racked beyond what the utmost industry and the amplest produce can bear ; and the consequence is, arrears of rent, for which the honest farmer is immediately arrested, his stock and crop seized, and frequently sold below their real value, to satisfy the unruly passion of power, or the unbounded demon of avarice : and thus he savagely and wantonly turns an innocent and helpless family adrift on the world, for the poor and sordid gratification of enjoying what he does not want ; the accumulation of a few pounds, which probably he may bestow upon his groom, or give them for a hunter, just as the caprice of the moment may stimulate him. He is an implacable and inveterate enemy, but a precarious and unstable friend. I would advise you to consult Sir Robert, and take his opinion on the business."

I EXPRESSED my acquiescence, and begged he would favour me with his company to Bertram Hall.

WE found Sir Robert and Lady Bertram walking in the garden; and whilst Mr. Brooke entertained the lady, I took the opportunity to acquaint Sir Robert with the circumstance, and the whole of Mr. Fennell's extraordinary behaviour.

He paused and looked thoughtful—then said,
 “ From a perfect knowledge of Mr. Fennell's character and disposition, I am not at all surprised at his behaviour towards you. He is not accustomed to opposition; hence his chagrin and irritability, at being checked in his progress, as he imagines, by your interposition, and declaring yourself a candidate for the affections of Olivia. His attendance is of some duration; his attention has been constant and assiduous; his offers are noble, honourable, and magnificent; yet, whatever may be the cause, his advances have been coolly received, and, though she hath never treated him with insult, he hath always experienced the most mortifying neglect. This he hath often complained of to me, even in the presence of Olivia. When I have rallied him upon the nature of his despondency, Lady Bertram has laughed at his amorous whining, while Olivia would gravely and seriously add a sly replication to any cautious interrogatory, which would at once have unhinged his resolution, and rendered him a sullen mute during the remainder of his visit. When I consider the man, his techy, froward pride, vain of his ancestry, and ambitious of his fortune, I cannot help being lost in amazement at his complacency and humility in the pursuit of an object he is not
 I 2 “ likely

"likely to obtain. But LOVE, Mr. Wilton, is omnipotent, subduing by an irresistible influence the most savage temper and untameable disposition. Some have been long subjugated by ambition, some by avarice, some by dissipation, and others by intemperance. All have their ruling passion; but Love may be said to be omnipotent, whilst the philosopher and the spendthrift, the hero and the miser, equally acknowledge his over-ruling power, and for a temporary enjoyment relax from the avidity of their darling pursuits."

SIR Robert concluded, and I thanked him for his information relative to Mr. Fennell; when he said, "Mr. Wilton, take no further cognizance of your interview with him: if he prosecute his threat, as probably he may, civility and gentle usage may happily conciliate, when opposition and resentment would only operate to inflame a mischievous design. Concession, where there is no offence, is unnecessary; but remember, that the bravest men have been always the most polite."

I ACKNOWLEDGED the justice of his remark; and Mr. Brooke soon after joining us, we retired,

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIX,

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MR. WILTON.

SIR,

I PERCEIVE, by the communication of your passion to the Bertram family, you have alleviated your anxiety, but acquired a formidable opponent, and, I conclude, an inveterate enemy. To be thwarted

thwarted in love by a more favoured admirer, is not easily forgiven or readily forgotten; it conveys an insult to the understanding, and a slight to the person of the unfortunate rival. This leaves a sting that will long corrode and rankle, will prompt the infernal spirit of revenge, and take a horrid pleasure in embittering the peace, if not destroying the existence of him, whose virtues were deemed more worthy of acceptance.

THIS is the real case with yourself and Mr. Fennell. He is exasperated at his supposed disappointment—he is revengeful from the instigations of dark brooding malice, and would rather enjoy the horrid triumph of assassination, than sit down peaceably under the supposition of his ridiculous defeat. His sullen behaviour and assuming arrogance were sufficiently demonstrative of his concealed envy, and which you have borne with all the calmness and patience of the most determined philosophy.

THERE is a certain dignity which every man owes to himself, and of which he ought not to suffer himself to be deprived, lest he should become the butt of petulance, and the dupe of stupidity. You know a man may be too good-natured, and suffer his resolution to grow tame beneath the asperity of insult and the sauciness of impertinent effrontery. This will not well consort with your maxims of christianity and philosophy, which inculcate patience and forbearance under the severest trials; and though you know me to be a christian, I am but an indifferent philosopher, for I shall ever conclude an insult as well as pain to be an evil. You may smile at my conclusion; but if I am not mistaken, you will soon have ample exercise for all your patience and philosophy, and find them but feeble weapons to repel the furious attacks

of your impetuous assailant Mr. Fennell. You have every thing to dread from the secret machinations, but nothing from the open attacks of such an enemy.

If his vehemence compel you to extremities, I expect you will plead for a short delay, by which my presence may probably prove of some little service to you in a part of the kingdom where you are a perfect stranger.

THE worthy Mr. Brooke, from the sacredness of his function, will have just cause to plead an exemption from interfering. He is the minister of peace, and your application to him, in the moment previous to action, would certainly be improper.

SIR Robert will as certainly decline any active part, lest his apparent preference might not only irritate the malicious principal, but diffuse the seeds of a lasting enmity among all his connections. He may attempt an accommodation, but your opponent seems to have too much irritability in his composition to admit of any honourable terms. Satisfaction is often demanded for a mere slip in the slippancy of inconsideration; what then must be expected from a man who is thus capable of deliberately contriving a personal insult?

FORGIVE, my Wilton, this honest warmth! It is expressed in the cause of my friend; and though I have no pretensions to the gift of prophecy, you may depend upon my prediction when I assure you, from the character given of Mr. Fennell both by Sir Robert and Mr. Brooke, that a rencounter will be inevitable.

My patience is a bad shield for my temper, when I take an impartial review of his whole behaviour towards

towards you. The gentleman was laid aside, but the hero was not assuaged. True courage is like the latent spark, which appears by collision.

I MUST now acquaint you with the intelligence which I have received from Mr. Bowman.

HE was five days at Wilton-Park, and during the most of that time diligently employed in the perusal of those legal instruments by which your family have enjoyed their estates and honours for many centuries. His investigation and opinion were not consentaneous to the ardent wishes of your father, for he declared the utter impracticability of a legal dissolution of the entail without your consent. Your father was much irritated, and seemed greatly disappointed at this opinion; but declared it was his ultimate resolution, that if either law, interest, or money could complete it, it should not be left undone. He added, moreover, that so undutiful a son, who had degraded the dignity of his family by his disobedience, ought never to enjoy the honours and privileges which had so long and eminently distinguished the name of Wilton.

MR. Bowman communicated this by letter, wherein he promised to acquaint me with any future proceedings on this business, if he should be applied to, as he is certain that Lord Wilton will prosecute it to the utmost of his power. He never saw your sisters, and very seldom your venerable mother, who did not seem to be apprized of the nature of the business which had brought him to Wilton-Park. He is lavish in his encomiums on her, and thinks it peculiarly unfortunate that all her sweet attentions and mild expostulations should meet with so ungracious a reception.

VIRTUE will certainly meet with a reward, even in this transitory scene of existence, which will amply requite all its former sufferings, and compensate the sufferer, to the manifest regret of the dissipated votaries of vice. Why wickedness should triumph, is a question which has puzzled the wisest men of all ages; therefore you must not expect an elucidation of such an abstruse subject from me, who am totally unequal to so abstract a discussion. That this is too often the case, the experience of every day convinces me; but why it is so I am ignorant, and rely firmly on the justice of the all-wise Disposer of Events, whose wisdom in the distribution of his favours here below will be one day demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of all his creatures. They may now murmur at his dispensations, from the partial view they have of them; but when his general providence shall be manifested, it will then appear evidently that all things were ordered for the best.

PRYTHEE, Wilton, do not laugh at me, although I have preached thee a Sermon. I have sometimes my serious hours, when I meditate with the profoundest awe on the goodness of our Creator and the unworthiness of his creatures. I have not yet learned the fashionable phrase, of religion being beneath the care and practice of a gentleman; of whom, however obsolete the usage may be, there are many whose abilities and erudition are more than sufficient to put the greatest champion of modern infidelity to the blush.

I HAD almost forgot to acquaint you, that the inclosed is part of my never-ending correspondence; yet I have the happiness to acquaint you, that my dear Antonet hath again got her release: but should her disobedience be discovered by the watchful eyes
of

of Argus, what will be the consequence? Yet I could almost find in my heart to discover it myself; for I think it would be a means of precipitating what obstinacy and perverseness have too long protracted.

LETTER XXX.

FROM MR. BENFIELD TO THE HON. MISS WILTON.

MY DEAR ANTONET,

ALTHOUGH, by the fertility of your invention, a correspondence is again commenced between us, which by the prohibitory mandates of a father had undergone a temporary suspension, yet I cannot forbear lamenting the continuance, and hourly wish for a happy conclusion of it.—That I love you, yes, love you with a pure and disinterested passion; a passion which has for several years embittered my happiness, and tinged my earthly cup with the gall of bitterness—you are already acquainted with. Then why, oh why, my Antonet, would you wish to protract the misery of a man, who is vain enough to conclude that he stands unrivalled in your affection?

PROUD of this distinction, and ambitious of this honour, what days of unhappiness, and nights of wretchedness, have I not suffered, in hopes of bringing to a favourable decision, an union which would make me the happiest among the sons of men! How, like an airy phantom, has this opinion deluded me, and led me forward from day to day, from year to year; whilst the promised joy seemed always within my grasp, yet wantonly eluded my most ardent attempts, and left me sorrowing in the deepest abyss of disappointment!

SHALL I hope, shall I live in the full expectation of having my hope one day accomplished, and amply enjoy the uncontrouled fruition of those pleasures, which you, yes, you alone can confer upon a willing captive to your merit? Yes, I will hope, yes, I will live in this expectation; and may the accomplishment be certain, may it be speedy! and may it bring that peace to my troubled breast, to which it has long been a stranger, which it has never enjoyed in the smallest degree since you robbed me of my not unwilling heart!

HAVE you duly and considerately weighed the proposal I made you, when last I had the pleasure of your company? It was not, my Antonet, dictated by the impulse of the moment; no, it was the result of mature deliberation, and the conclusion of my most serious thoughts. Come, come then to my arms, confer and participate of that happiness, which absence, which cruel suspense, corrodes, and totally destroys. Oh why will you longer delay, why will you tantalize, and deprive me of that peace, which you alone are able to confirm and establish!

FROM the tenderness of your nature, and the susceptibility of your feelings, I have not the least suspicion that you wish to play the tyrant, and rivet those chains the faster which were at first imposed by your loveliness and amiability.

OH ANTONET! I was happy, I was at peace, till I knew you. I became a captive to your charms, and from that moment I may with truth affirm tranquillity has fled from my bosom. My grief is pungent, my solicitude is permanent; come to my arms, then, my Antonet, come to my arms, dispel my grief, ease my solicitude, and make me completely happy. Let

not

not money, let not fortune, paltry consideration! deter you: I have enough for both you and me. My estate is large, my fortune is ample; come then to my arms, give me yourself, and take my fortune.

THINK not that the loss of a few thousands will ever cost me a thought, or give me one moment of discontent, whilst I am perfectly blessed in the affections of my Antonet. I have already sufficient to enable us to live with splendour, to diffuse ease and competence amongst my dependants, who were many of them the domestics of my father, and who have long enjoyed their little with much more content than myself, to whom they look up with awe and reverence. Happy mortals! who pass away the "*noiseless tenor of their lives*," strangers to the cares of opulence and grandeur!

You say that you have one urgent and prevailing motive for denying my request. You remind me of having a father. True, I have, and a father who never exerted his authority to destroy the natural and common privileges of his son; who hath, with the tenderest sensibility of an indulgent parent, been ever more ready to administer to my innocent desires, than I have been to demand of him the means of gratification.

YES, my Antonet, I have a father, who will treat you with more gentleness, more tenderness, and more real affection, than you have long experienced from your natural parent. He has been regularly apprized of every incident relative to our long attachment; and though he gently animadvert upon Lord Wilton's tyrannical behaviour, he expresses his entire approbation of the amiable conduct of the daughter.

His years have not impaired his understanding; and though time hath scattered its silver frost upon his head, he is cheerful, lively and intelligent; willing to allow every amusement, compatible with the precepts of virtue, to the youthful part of his species, well knowing that innocence may comport with cheerfulness, and diversion with morality. May the hoary hand of Time be long long waved over his venerable head! and may he at last drop into his grave, like the ripened ear full of age, as he is already full of good works!

He says, my Antonet, that he will be a father to you; will cherish your hopes, assuage your sorrows, and from his experience will lead you through the thorny mazes of this troublesome life. Then fly to the arms of a husband, to the counsels of a father, who longs to bestow his blessing on his amiable adopted daughter, and shed the cheerful ray of peace on the mansion of the aged and the virtuous. Gray hairs are honourable; and, when decorated with the palms of virtue, are a crown of glory to the wearer.

THINK, my angel, think, should the ghastly tyrant of the human race lay his leaden hand on the head of your venerable mother, which Heaven long avert, would your situation be agreeable; or even tolerable? Would such an unfortunate event ameliorate the temper of your father, or sooth him into kindness towards the dear pledges she would leave behind her? The trial might not probably answer your expectation; and when thus circumstanced, to whom could you with propriety complain, when that tongue which soothed your sorrows, when that heart which beat but for your happiness, are mouldering and mingling with their native dust! She being gone, what friend on earth will treat you with that tenderness, what hand will shield you from the pelting storm

forms of life, what heart feel and melt at your sorrows equal to that of your faithful Benfield? When the crimson tinge of health blooms upon your cheek, when the smile of joy glances from your eye, it shall be my hourly study to preserve the one, and add to the enjoyments of the other. If the chilly touch of sickness should blight the blushing rose upon your cheek, and blast the sweetening smile of joy which glanced from your eye, I would sit by your bed, kiss the paleness from your lips, and, if I could not assuage your pain, would administer consolation, and weep over your sufferings.

BELIEVE me, when I assert that you will find my affection to be unalterable, not lessened by time, nor impaired by possession. It has already undergone a long and severe trial; then form a favourable resolution, and instantly execute it, that my patience may be amply rewarded, and my constant love, which has merited your approbation, be crowned with assured success. Time steals on with rapid steps; Age, his inseparable companion, creeps close behind; and whilst we delay our happiness by an inefficacious parley, *they* come pressing forward, to lay their cold fingers on our unsuspecting brows.

LET us then seriously consider what we are doing; let us not only reflect, but let us determine to act. Of what hours, what days, nay, of what years of happiness and pleasure have we not deprived ourselves by a filial compliance with that refractory turn of mind which is neither softened by time nor soothed by solicitation! Then come, my Antonet, come and rest upon my bosom, where alone you may repose your sorrows, and where, if you find not always a speedy relief, you will ever experience a certain alleviation.

WHY

WHY are you so diffident of your sister Sophy? she is advancing fast to years of maturity; she is neither void of discretion nor affection for her honourable mother. Cannot you confide in her tenderness? May she not be the gentle companion and the soothing minister in the heavy hour of distress? I think she may. Reflect!—you will reside only a few miles distance from Wilton-Park, and a constant communication may be easily supported, by which you may pass and repass with little more difficulty than if you were a daily resident beneath your father's roof.

LET these arguments prevail, for I can think of no others. I turn giddy when I review my former disappointments—let your resolution prevent them for the future.

SINCE you have devised a method for our epistolary correspondence, would not the same effect a personal interview? I think it is not impracticable. Let your sister, your maid who is already in the secret, or even your mother, attend you; and, oh Antonet, let not too nice a scrupulosity, too strict an adherence to your duty, deter you from a compliance with this innocent request. I shall come disguised and unattended, to prevent discovery. May the thought prove auspicious, and the interview fortunate! I shall await your answer with all the ardour and all the impatience which the fervour of my passion demands.

L E T T E R XXXI.

FROM THE HON. MISS WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

S I R,

YOUR letter has not only perplexed but rendered me unhappy. I have perused it over and over again. It is written with more than usual ardour. Your expressions are more rapturous than formerly, your sensibility more lively, and your affection more explicit. To what motive shall I ascribe the change? I know, from long experience, that it must be a laudable one. To adduce the same arguments for a further procrastination which have already been so frequently urged, would be tedious and irksome; and I confess myself utterly at a loss how to fabricate or invent any that are new. The first still operate with their original force, and as the same reasons still remain, they militate against any thing that can be urged to overturn their energy.

OH BENFIELD, why would you persuade me to so unwarrantable a proceeding at this critical conjuncture? My dear brother, by an inconsiderate act, hath involved our whole family in sorrow and distress; and would you, by inducing me to commit a similar act of disobedience, contribute to spread a deeper gloom thro' the house of sorrow and disquiet? You know your influence, you have long known it; do not then attempt to lead my devious steps from those paths of duty in which I was early taught to walk by the wisdom of a parent, whom I shall honour and revere whilst memory is capable of recollecting her virtues and her worth.

You

You know my affection ; it is permanent, unalterable ; has long withstood the storms of an enraged father ; and though, in this instance, I cannot plead my duty, I assure you, by the vows of the most sacred love, it will remain firm and unshaken to its original purpose.

THIS determination, you must be very confident, instead of contributing to my peace, will only accumulate day by day additional misery and discontent. But what cannot be avoided without a violation of the precepts of virtue, it is an obligation of duty to suffer with patience and resignation.

THE recapitulation of the unhappy effects of your constant passion, however pleasing, however soothing to female vanity, was certainly unnecessary. I have long experienced from you that unalterable love, that unceasing attachment to promote my peace and augment my happiness, which are the inseparable attendants on an unshaken constancy and perseverance. You have long convinced me of the purity of your intentions, as well as the fervour of your affections ; and, relying with an implicit confidence upon your virtue, I have listened with increasing pleasure to your vows, in full hopes that time might produce the happy consummation of all our wishes ; what stronger assurances then can you wish for than this confidence affords ; for what can be more binding than the acknowledgement that I listen with increasing pleasure to your vows ?

OH BENFIELD, rely on my sincerity, and tempt not the weakness of a woman, who you know loves you, to transgress the just limits of that duty and obedience which are prescribed to her by the laws of her Creator, and pointed out to her by all the precepts of un sullied virtue.

IF you have been rendered unhappy and discontented by the interruption of a mutual intercourse, you may be assured that I have seldom tasted the sweets of peace or the calmness of repose. The common privilege of your sex affords you the happy opportunity of alleviating your sorrows by communicating your sentiments and feelings to some faithful friend; but to women, even this relief is rigidly denied, and, bound by the harsh restraints which the delicacy and reserve of female natures have imposed, I must bear the secret of my sorrows with painful silence. How many sleepless nights have I passed, how often have I moistened my pillow with my silent tears, after a vain and ineffectual struggle between my duty and my affection. The deepening shades of night have closed upon my sorrows, and the enlivening ray of welcome morning has tinged the chambers of the East, ere the soft, the often-invoked touch of sleep has closed my wearied eyes. Waking and restless, the only pleasure I enjoy is in a soothing retrospect of the many happy hours I have experienced from your kindness and affection.

ON Benfield, a perusal of these last sentences excites a soft suffusion on my cheeks, and silently reproaches me for the indiscreet confession. Delicacy would have expunged the declaration, but affection pleaded more strongly for their insertion; and if you feel half the emotion from the perusal which I have felt in the composition, your friendship will throw a veil over my weakness, and forgive my folly.

CONSCIOUS of your disinterestedness, let me not suffer the imputation of caprice and inconstancy when I aver that I can never become the wife of any man, to be a mere dependent on his beneficence. This sentiment renders your contempt of earthly pageantry
the

the more conspicuous, and would attach me more, if that were possible, to the man who is capable of making so generous a proposal. The acceptance of your offers would hurt my sensibility; and might be construed, by the tongue of calumny and reproach, into sordid meanness and avaricious servility.

THE wish, the most ardent wish of my heart is to meet the man of my choice on the equal footing of love and independence. Blame not my resolution; I have the firmest reliance on your honour; and tho' I have not the least doubt of being as acceptable to my Benfield without adding one iota to his fortune as if I should bring him millions, yet, possessing this peculiarity of disposition, I wish to indulge it; and I think you will not blame me for declaring to you without hesitation these independent sentiments.

YOUR father, how amiable in his age, how pleasing is his evening sun! May he for many years continue a blessing to his son, and to all around him! What pleasure would it give me to call him Father! what consolation to be called his Daughter! But remember, it is my daily charge to still the wintry storms of declining age, to sooth the bitterness of anguish, and carefully to wipe away the tear of discontent. And would you seduce me from my charge? from that post which God and nature have assigned me? I think not. Remember, O remember, Benfield, that you also have a kind parent.

I HAVE candidly considered your proposal of an interview; and to allay my scruples, and remove all doubts, I communicated it to my honoured mother.

SHE started at the proposal. I tenderly asked the cause of her emotion.

My

“ My dear child,” said she, “ I know the constancy
 “ of your affection for Mr. Benfield, I am not ignorant of your fidelity and long attachment, and yet
 “ I am not precipitate to condemn you. Your constancy may meet with what I am sure it merits, a
 “ future reward, and I trust your fidelity will in the
 “ event triumph over all impediments. I perceive
 “ it is not your intention to deceive ; otherwise,
 “ Mr. Benfield would not have proposed or you have
 “ communicated the wish for me to accompany you.
 “ This is perfectly coincident with the first principles
 “ of your education, which was virtuous, moral, and
 “ religious. He says, he will come disguised and
 “ unattended, to prevent discovery, as a discovery
 “ might be attended with the most dreadful consequences. Do you wish, Antonet, for an interview ?”

“ My dear mother, you are no stranger to my
 “ inclination ; but I will endeavour to suppress my
 “ wish, if it militate against your approbation.”

“ To indulge my children in what is innocent and
 “ virtuous, was always my chief delight ; and possibly I may not transgress the strictest rules of propriety by voluntarily accompanying you to meet
 “ the gentleman with whom you are solicitous to be
 “ united. I would rather the storm fell upon me
 “ than upon your sister. Appoint your hour—I
 “ will attend you.”

THIS determination, made with her wonted goodness at the apparent hazard of her tranquillity, quite overcame me—my heart was full—she saw and felt the soft emotion—I expressed my gratitude in silence.

TO-MORROW evening, at five o'clock, we expect you in WILTON WOOD.

LETTER XXXII.

FROM THE HON. MR. WILTON TO MR. BENFIELD.

S I R,

YOU seem more precipitate by your proposal to share my dangers, than Mr. Fennell is to expose me to them ; for notwithstanding his peremptory behaviour at our last interview, his terrific threat at his departure, and the seeming ferocity of his character, I have not yet heard a syllable more from him upon the subject. As a man of courage, I have not the least dread to meet him ; but as a Christian, a solemn fear rushes upon my soul at the idea of a duel, and quite unmans me with its sacred impression. To decline meeting him upon such a cause, if honourably called upon, would, by the modish world, be construed into the cowardly evasion of downright poltroonery. By accepting his call, I know that I shall not only transgress the plainest dictates of our holy religion, but act in contradiction to the suggestions of my own conscience, and the established laws of my country. Religion expressly prohibits every attempt to deprive a fellow-creature of his existence, and dreadfully denounces the severest vengeance on him who shall daringly and wantonly rush into the awful presence of the Almighty without his previous permission.

CONSCIENCE, the inward monitor of mankind, is an emanation of the Divinity, implanted in the human breast to warn man from error, and correct the voluntary commission of crimes. The laws of our country, although they are express against the action, rest in a state of dull torpidity, and tacitly allow every petty villain to violate them with impunity.

IN

IN this perturbed, irresolute state of my mind, I cannot say whether in the event the ebullitions of passion or the mild influence of religion and conscience may finally predominate. Subjects difficult of decision are always irksome; I shall therefore quit the present with the utmost indifference, and patiently wait for the event. In the sphere of reason the orb of man would ever safely move, if passion did not sometimes interpose its heat, and, with eccentric power, drive him beyond the limits of prudence and discretion.

HAVING obtained permission to pay my addresses to the charming Olivia, I went to Bertram Hall, with a full intention to seize the first opportunity of improving the slight impression which I was vain enough to imagine I had made on her mind. Upon my arrival, and not finding her with Sir Robert and Lady Bertram in the parlour, I actually had the assurance to enquire where she was. Lady Bertram smiled, and said, "I perceive, Mr. Wilton, you are a vigorous assailant; I wish you may not subdue the fortress in as short a time, proportionably, as Mr. Fennell hath been carrying on a tedious unsuccessful siege, without being capable of making the least impression. I am certain if you deprive us of our lovely companion, you will deprive us of one of the greatest blessings that Heaven can confer upon us. But why should I grieve at an event which I know must one day happen? I remember, when I was young, it was the first wish of my heart to be married, and I verily believe it is so with every daughter of Eve."

"PR'YTHEE Pat," said Sir Robert, laughing, "hold thy tongue; why wouldst thou display all the wishes and caprices of thy sex? If you proceed in
" this

"this manner, you will teach Mr. Wilton how to win Olivia, and with your own artillery."

"Pshaw, pshaw, Robert," replied my Lady, "you remember how I plagued and tantalized you: though I had resolved to have you from the first, yet I was determined to play a few vagaries, before I surrendered up my liberty."—Here chucking Sir Robert under the chin, "You know I was a vixen (added she);—but, Mr. Wilton, you will find Olivia in the garden."

I LOOKED at Sir Robert; and receiving from him a nod of assent, I left the room, smiling at Lady Bertram's innocent freedom and cheerful familiarity.

I FOUND the sweet object of my hopes sitting with a book in her hand in a small alcove, shaded with the flaunting eglantine in full bloom. The fragrance it diffused was agreeable, cheering, and exhilarating. The fair and lovely student was so intent upon her book, that she never perceived me, as I walked along the verdant path, until I was directly before the entrance of the alcove. She looked up; and rising at the same time, with a visible emotion, said, "Mr. Wilton!"—A livelier bloom flushed upon her cheek—a soft confusion overspread her lovely countenance—her glistening eyes were cast upon the ground, and she stood like a statue fixed and motionless. My eyes were riveted on her charming figure, while my heart beat in unison to the tumultuous emotions of my mind. I had devised a thousand tender and endearing expressions; but at present, so prevalent was my trepidation, I could not recollect one single sentence. She raised her eyes, and cast a glance upon me, which seemed to reproach my timid silence. THE IDEA burst from my mind—the words trembled upon my tongue, but—but I could not articulate them.

AND

AND is this, my dear Benfield, the effect of love ? Painful passion ! but it is a pain mingled with most exquisite pleasure.

AFTER a temporary pause, I laid my hand upon the book, which she held in her's yet opened, and said, " May I ask your indulgence, my dear Olivia, for this abrupt intrusion upon your solitary retirement ? "

" I FREQUENTLY (she replied) retire to this sequestered arbour, to peruse my favourite authors. "

" MAY I presume to enquire to what author you have been devoting your present moments ? "

SHE held forth the book to me—I took it—and I thought she heaved a gentle sigh, as she gave it to me. It was THOMSON, that poet of nature, that author of sensibility ! The book was open at the pathetic episode of Palemon and Lavinia. I read, from an enthusiasm I always entertained for the tender simplicity of the story, the first two lines :

" The lovely young Lavinia once had friends,
" And fortune smil'd deceitful on her birth."

SHE clapped her hand upon the place, and exclaimed, " O Wilton ! "—She turned away her face plucked the flowers from the adjacent woodbine ; and endeavoured, by smelling at them, to hide her emotions from my observation.

As I found myself intimately concerned in every incident relative to her, I closed the book, took her hand, and, eagerly kissing it, tenderly enquired the cause of her sudden exclamation.

SHE

SHE said, " Believe, me, Mr. Wilton, I have a
 " cause—my exclamation was involuntary—one day,
 " probably, you may know it—at present enquire
 " no farther."

I OBEYED her injunction, and repressed a curiosity
 which her mysterious manner had considerably in-
 creased.

STILL holding her hand, I asked if she would in-
 dulge me in the pleasure of being seated, while I
 acquainted her with the feelings of my heart, and
 explained the letter which I had the presumption to
 convey to her hand.

WITHOUT the least scruple or hesitation, she sat
 down; at the same time saying, " The explanation
 " which you were so candid and ingenuous as to make
 " to Sir Robert last night, he has kindly communi-
 " cated to me this morning. I am now no longer at
 " a loss to conceive the meaning of several expres-
 " sions in your epistle, which before were altogether
 " inexplicable. And so, Mr. Wilton, you have in-
 " curred your father's displeasure, by absolutely re-
 " fusing to be united to the daughter of Sir George
 " Silvertop?"

" I HAVE, my charming Olivia, I have dared
 " upon a subject of such importance to think for my-
 " self, and have boldly overstepped the limits which
 " the doctrines of passive obedience have prescribed.
 " I have however by this step forfeited my father's
 " protection, and plunged the most amiable of
 " mothers into sorrow and distress. To avoid
 " the shackles of matrimony with a lady whom I
 " could not love, I fled to this place, and by a pecu-
 " liar happiness in my untoward destiny have become

“ a voluntary captive to those accomplishments which I now adore.”

DROPPING upon my knees, I pressed her hand to my lips with an eagerness to which I had been hitherto a stranger—I fixed my eyes with a look of kindness and complacency upon her face, and fondly enjoyed her apparent confusion—

SHE was silent.

“ LET me not arise from this supplicating posture, without you condescend to honour my addresses with the smile of approbation.”

SHE replied, “ Mr. Wilton, arise ; I cannot think of answering you while I behold you in this posture. Adoration is not my due ; and, however custom may have given it a sanction, I am apt to believe that vanity, not wisdom, in many of my sex, hath prompted them to conclude, that the acceptance of such a service is nothing more than the just reward of their distinguished merit.”

I AROSE, and, without interrupting her, sat down by her.

SHE continued : “ Mr. Wilton, though the few accomplishments which my benevolent Creator hath endowed me with, and which I have not the vanity to suppose give me any pre-eminence over the majority of my sex, may have raised an honourable passion in your bosom, what apology could you make to the world, what answer to your own conscience, what satisfaction to your offended father, were you to be so successful as to meet with a consummation of your wishes ?”

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I REPLIED,

I REPLIED, " My dear Olivia, although in this instance I have confessed my disobedience in refusing to marry in conformity to the dictates of paternal authority, yet do not therefore imagine that I am so lost to all sense of filial duty, as finally to conclude so interesting and important an affair without first imparting it to my honoured parents, and earnestly soliciting their consent. If that were without reason ultimately refused, I should stand acquitted, I trust, in the eye of an impartial public, be free from the compunctions of my own conscience, and not accused of disrespect to those whom religion and virtue teach me to revere."

" BUT, Mr. Wilton, have you maturely weighed the consequences attendant on the completion of this pursuit ?"

" OH Olivia, do not conjure up imaginary impediments on this occasion, where probably too many real ones may actually exist. Do not add to my misery by enumerating obstacles which may never happen ; but which, if they do, it is my duty to sustain with fortitude and resignation. Few incidents in life, even the most trivial, would be undertaken, if we had the least presentiment of the many unfortunate events which are the sure and certain consequence of them. Let us not embitter our present moments by indulging those gloomy phantoms which the fertility of imagination may be able to pourtray, and thereby disturb our peace, though they may never happen."

" Is it not, Sir, a wise and prudent maxim to prepare for the hapless contingencies of adversity ; since without such a preparation we shall seldom

“ seldom be enabled to endure those baleful strokes
“ which neither prudence can foresee nor caution
“ prevent ?”

“ I ACKNOWLEDGE, Olivia, the justness of your
“ observation—but why so solemn, so cautious at
“ the commencement of a connection which I have
“ the most ardent hope will finally terminate in hap-
“ piness and peace ?”

PUTTING my arm round her waist, and gently
pressing her to my bosom—“ What wayward occur-
“ rence in this life can ruffle my happiness, if I
“ should be so fortunate as to be blessed with the pos-
“ session of your affection !”

“ AH Mr. Wilton, you are not that novice in
“ the world, not that utter stranger to the manners
“ of the times, as really to conclude, that the bare
“ possession of my affection would be sufficient to
“ counterbalance the many uneasinesses, the warp-
“ ing discontents, the gloom of sorrow, and the
“ gnawing stings of cool neglect, which are con-
“ stantly floating in this temporary scene of casual
“ existence.”

“ YES, my angel, yes, a more than sufficient con-
“ solation for the worst that can befall me. At pre-
“ sent, you know, I am a poor alien, estranged from
“ the tenderness and care, the indulgence and kind
“ attentions of my parents ; cast upon the world as
“ unworthy of their notice and undeserving of their
“ protection. In this forlorn and hopeless condition,
“ permit me, oh Olivia, permit me to pour my sor-
“ rows into your bosom, as a gentle asylum, where
“ they may experience some relief, and repose in
“ confidence of a total alleviation.”

"INDEED, Henry, you may be deceived; happiness is not always acquired even by the accomplishment of those very means which we often and vainly suppose to be solely productive of this ideal phantom."

"CALL not happiness ideal, Olivia, it is a reality, and what can deprive me of it if you deign to bless me with your love?"

HERE, sighing, she made an attempt to arise, while I tenderly enfolded her in my arms; and eagerly exclaimed, "My Olivia, why will you leave me?"

SHE confusedly replied, "Look there"—when lo! Sir Robert and Lady Bertram were standing about half way along the verdant path which led directly to the alcove where we were sitting.

LADY Bertram had one arm through Sir Robert's, and with the other she was pointing with her finger to us; shaking with an immoderate fit of laughter.

WE arose.

OLIVIA walked from me through a private path, whilst Lady Bertram called after her, and seemingly enjoyed her confusion.

THE interruption was unwelcome and unseasonable; the mirth and hilarity of Lady Bertram, at present, afforded no relish to my mind. After a few turns round the garden, therefore, I took my leave; happy in the idea I had formed, that the lovely Olivia did not regard me with total indifference.

OH

OH Benfield, she is loveliness itself. Her person is rather above the middle size, small, slender, delicately turned, and finely proportioned. Her face is beyond the power of language to describe.--Her complexion, which is fair, is heightened by the lively tinge of crimsoned health which glows upon her cheeks.--Her fine blue eyes are soft, mild and expressive.--Cheerful, animated, and engaging smiles beam upon her countenance.--Her hair, an agreeable auburn, hangs waving over her shoulders in curling ringlets, without powder. She was dressed in white, a colour which I thought peculiarly adapted to her complexion ; and when she moved or spoke, a superior grace gave new charms to the natural elegance and dignity of her person. You will say, this is a portrait drawn by the pencil of a lover. It is so ; the tints may be fine, and the colouring brilliant, but, notwithstanding my partiality for the original, the resemblance is as near as human art can come to divine perfection ; and of the truth of this assertion, I trust that you will one day have an opportunity of judging for yourself.

HOWEVER this connexion may terminate, I find myself involved in the pleasurable intricacies of a pure disinterested love. My hopes are warm and ardent, and since my late interview, where my reception was coincident with my wishes, I see nothing but uninterrupted happiness and perpetual joy. I dare not once think, in the rapture of my imagination, on the family at Wilton-Park, lest reflection should embitter the felicity of my present moments.

THERE are many events in life whose original and progress appear, to the thinking individual, pregnant with disaster and calamity ; yet contrary to expectation, and beyond their immediate effect, have been
ult-

ultimately productive of the greatest good; disseminating joy, plenty, pleasure, and abundance, where grief, solicitude, penury and want, were supposed to be their inseparable attendants. From this examination of the concatenation of causes and effects, I am ardent enough to cherish the hope, that my present alienation from my family, though originally teeming with evil, brought me auspiciously to the banks of the Wanbeck, where I may acquire a compensation which will render me, through life, happy and contented.

I am, &c.

J. D. G.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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